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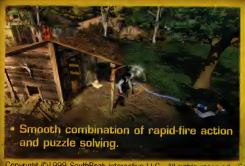
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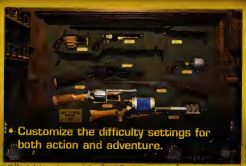
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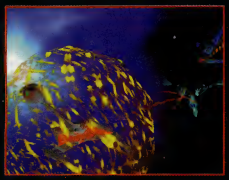
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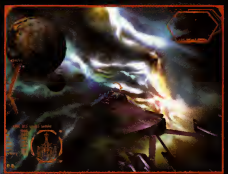
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HEAVY METAL: F.A.K.2 ... AND YOU

This is the game your mother warned you about. Come inside and take a gander at the game, the movie, the big hair, and the best looking *Quake III* engine game yet. Finally a game that uses *Quake III*'s curved surfaces on what they were intended for — heaving, lactating breasts!



31

THE SIMS

SimChrissy? Meet SimBrenda. What's better than hot lesbo love? Hot lesbo love in a world you control, of course! Maxis gives us the ultimate in doilhouses, and like the real men that we are, we loosen our belts and start playing for all we're worth



DEPARTMENTS

TECHPHILES 58

The NVIDIA GeForce cards get worked over in the back. For aspiring wheelmen we review the NASCAR Charger Racing Wheel

PLAY BY PLAY 90

NBA Live 2000 arrives in style and we put it to work like one of Kathy Lee's "employees." And, you decide who owns the court — *PC Gamer* vs. super bad-ass *PC Accelerator*

ONLINE ARENA 94

After playing through *Rogue Spear* for the 100th time, we convinced Red Storm's Philip Hebert to spit some knowledge about the mission editor, and we share it with you

STRATEGY 98

While playing *AOE II*, do you feel like France in WWII? Read our strategy guide and learn how to avoid being a sniveling sissy-boy who rolls over the second an invasion hits

X-TRA 105

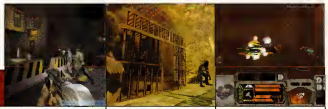
The real reason people buy this fine magazine — advice on surviving the collapse of civilization, the worst piece of crap since *POP3D*, and as always, pics of chicks!



ON THE COVER

Julie Strain came to our photo shoot with very little clothing and three other *Penthouse* Pets. Needless to say we were very happy. As always, Eric Smith wrangled the breasts while Ed Foxx snapped the photos. Make-up was done by Mara Capozzi (one of the pets). All in all it was a very eventful day — wish you could have been there. Not.

PREVIEWS



43 DEUS EX
Rob has been hitting the crack pipe again as he proclaims his most recent best game of the year

50 PLANET OF THE APES
Finally the term "Game Monkey" doesn't refer to the new guy on staff

54 STAR TREK ARMADA
Realtime strategy game in the Star Trek universe? Too good to be true, or is it?

REVIEWS



65 People say we're mean. We say f—k if they can't make a game good enough to pass our rigorous testing. So there!

66 WHEEL OF TIME
Guess Robert Jordan's books didn't suck quite enough of our time away

71 GTA2
Rob and steal from behind the wheel — all with the same look and feel — what's the deal?

72 SPEC OPS 2
U.S. Rangers must stay focused while assaulted by soldiers, terrorists and ... plenty of bugs



73 SEPTERRA CORE
You can never have too much Astroglide or too much *Final Fantasy*

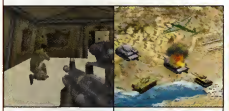
76 PHARAOH
If the game sucked we could have said, "it sphinx." Another wasted opportunity, damn

78 HARLEY DAVIDSON
Dreams of *Easy Rider* and leather chaps — shattered in just one install

82 DRIVER
Bouncing, slamming, sliding fun in major cities while breakin' the law and dodging the fuzz. We dig it

83 REVENANT
Are these colored lights bright enough to show under the looming shadow of *Diablo II*?

85 DEMOLITION RACER
Go! Go faster! Smash everything! Aren't PlayStation ports hella cool!



86 DELTA FORCE 2
Voxels. Lots of voxels. Are you man enough to handle all these voxels?

88 PANZER GENERAL
The most time tested PC wargame ever goes 3D — is good, yes?



CELEBRITIES THAT SURVIVED THE APOCALYPSE AND STOPPED BY FOR OUR "GALA" ISSUE

Pee Wee Herman, Banzai, Carmen Elektra, Lita Ford, Julie Strain, Clyde, Marcel, Heather Locklear, Samantha Fox, Samantha Foxx, Bruce Campbell, Puppet, Sandra Bullock, Michelle Pfeiffer, Poison, Cinderella, RATT, Stripper... we're sorry to inform you that the rest of the celebrities went to the Scientology Ranch in Nevada, where they all took their own pampered lifes -- the sissies

COLUMNS

EDITOR'S LETTER 12
Salmon has some touching things to say and some bizarre advice for life — just ignore him and snicker behind his back. That's what we do

FIRST PERSON 122
Dark games, pasty-skinned gamers. Ed "What the hell, I might as well get a real job" Lee and the newbie battle it out over the darkening of the PC

THE DISC

14
Ed, the Prince of Deadlines, finally gives up on being a red or green beret, and goes for "Raspberry" with this month's disc theme song

The contents of this magazine have been scientifically proven to be "virtually" harmless

HOW TO BREAK IN A FEDORA:



1. Make sure each side of the crown has a smooth, curved indent.

2. For a look that says you've got places to go and bad guys to hurt, give the brim a nice, even crease.



EXPERT METHODS:

3. Canine chew toy.



4. Mine shaft wind shear.



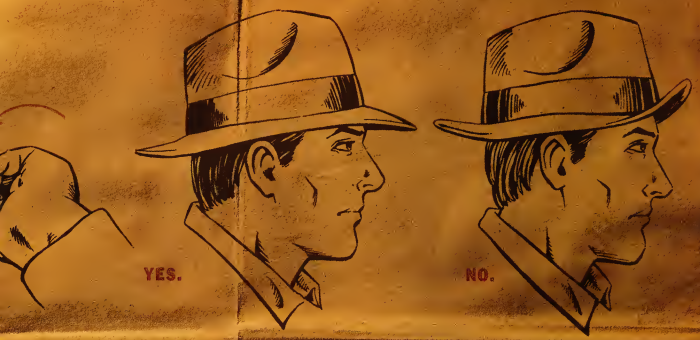
5. High altitude bridge-hopping.



From the mountains of Kazakhstan to the ruins of the Olmecs. 11's 17 chapters

TEEN T
ESRB
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3 Never, under any circumstances, turn the brim up. Remember, you want to look like a stud archaeologist, not some guy named Cletus.

7 Raging H_2O soaks.



8 Lava vapor treatments.



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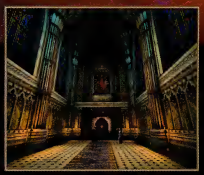
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YOU'RE ALIVE, NOW START ENJOYING IT

If you are reading this then I can only assume that either the apocalypse didn't come or you are a cockroach. Either way, isn't it great to be alive? Sometimes it takes a brush with the long sleep to truly wake us up. Now that the scare is over should we resume our 9 to 5 robotic lives working for "The Man," drinking Starbucks, and wearing orange vests because The Gap told us to?

Yes and no. Without the monotonous daily existence we all endure, what the hell would we do? Every time I stay home sick from work (hungover counts as sick), I am forced to endure the torture known as daytime TV. Springer, soap operas, and cross-dressing transsexual midgets with a foot fetish: The pure torture is enough to make me feel better and get my ass in to work. Besides, how else would you pay for games if you didn't work?

My suggestion is to add a little life to everything you do. You've already got a head start because you read **PCXL**. Now go forth and inject a little **PCXL** into everything you do. Games are fun. Life is fun. So stop being so damned serious. They say there is a time for work and a time for play — I say you gotta make time at work to play. And if you're going to be playing at work, you might as well do it right. As always, we aim to inform you of the best PC gaming has to offer and how to get the most enjoyment out of it. After all, we play games for fun ourselves — something that every other game magazine seems to have forgotten.

MIKE SALMON, *Editor in Chief*

PC ACCELERATOR January 2000

This month's staff photos are brought to you via the magic of *NBA Live 2000*

THE TEAM

EDITOR IN CHIEF



MIKE SALMON

EMAIL —> mike@pcxl.com
NEW YEARS RESOLUTION —> To quit smoking and drinking
PLANS TO SPEND NEW YEARS —> In a San Francisco hotel bar liquored up and smoking like there's no tomorrow
CATCHPHRASE FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM —> "I'm gonna get 20th century on yer ass!"
NOW PLAYING —> *AOE II, Quake III, Unreal Tournament, NBA Live 2K*

EXECUTIVE EDITOR



ROB SMITH

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NEW YEARS RESOLUTION —> To actually spend some time with my family
PLANS TO SPEND NEW YEARS —> Whining about how much better Y2K would be in the UK
CATCHPHRASE FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM —> "Jammy Git 2K"
NOW PLAYING —> MS Word, *FIFA 2000, Bust a Move on NeoGeo Pocket*

MANAGING EDITOR



PHILIP MAYARD

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NEW YEARS RESOLUTION —> To stop playing *Quake* — walk, I mean for the rest of you bastards to stop playing *Quake*
PLANS TO SPEND NEW YEARS —> Partying on the slopes with Oprah
CATCHPHRASE FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM —> "It's not a real party til' somebody cries."
NOW PLAYING —> *Centipede, Slap up the editorial team for playing AOE II*

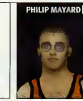
THE NEW GUY



MATT HOLMES

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NEW YEARS RESOLUTION —> To "really" join the staff of **PCXL**, escaping the hell that is LS.
PLANS TO SPEND NEW YEARS —> Doing other **PCXL** staffers' shit work
CATCHPHRASE FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM —> "I brought you into the millennium, I can seal yer ass back!"
NOW PLAYING —> *AOE II, Quake III, Revenant, Rogue Spear*

ASSOCIATE EDITOR



ED LEE

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NEW YEARS RESOLUTION —> 1600 x 1200 all the time
PLANS TO SPEND NEW YEARS —> In Times Square New York City – waiting for exactly 12:00
CATCHPHRASE FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM —> "Don't make me go HAL 9000 on yo' ass"
NOW PLAYING —> *Pong 3D, AOE II, Quake III, Homeworld, Nigster, Freecell*

ASSISTANT EDITOR



CHUCK OSBORN

EMAIL —> chuck@pcxl.com
NEW YEARS RESOLUTION —> To stop volunteering to review crappy games
PLANS TO SPEND NEW YEARS —> Hiding under his bed waiting for the apocalypse
CATCHPHRASE FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM —> "I'm gonna kick your ass back into the 1900s"
NOW PLAYING —> *AOE II, Quake III, Unreal Tournament, Homeworld, Hot Chix and Gear Stix*

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NEW YEARS RESOLUTION —> To stop thinking about sex all the time
PLANS TO SPEND NEW YEARS —> Getting it out of her system (if you know what we mean)
CATCHPHRASE FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM —> "In the 20th century you might have had a chance"
NOW PLAYING —> *Actionstar 2000, Hearts, Pandora's Box*

ART DIRECTOR



KYLE LEBOEUF

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NEW YEARS RESOLUTION —> To start calling back women, just like he promised last year
PLANS TO SPEND NEW YEARS —> In Amsterdam, pushing the limits of the human body
CATCHPHRASE FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM —> "That's sooo '90s"
NOW PLAYING —> *Homeworld, AOE II, Quake III, Unreal Tournament*

ASSOCIATE ART DIRECTOR



ERIC SMITH

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NEW YEARS RESOLUTION —> To start doing something so bad that he'll have a decent resolution for next year
PLANS TO SPEND NEW YEARS —> Snowboarding in Tahoe, avoiding trees and out of control Canadians
CATCHPHRASE FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM —> "Word, sppss style"
NOW PLAYING —> *AOE II, Home world, Quake III, Unreal Tournament*

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MOCKING —> *Requiem, Rosie O'Donnell, creepy butt doctors*
***Fabulous prizes this month = Yet another copy of *Recall*, a bunch of crap leftover from our Christmas gifts feature**

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5194501

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1999-DISC

NOW FOR THE BLINDINGLY OBVIOUS...

Here's Prince with this month's Disc song.

I was dreamin' when I burned disc,
forgive me if it goes ostroy

But when I woke up this mornin'
could've sworn it was
Deadline Day

The sky wos oll purple, there were
demos crashin' everywhere

Tryin' 2 run from the destruction, U
know I didn't even care

Cuz they say 2aaa zero zero party
over, oops, out of time!

So 2night Disc's gonno porty like
it's 1999!

I was dreamin' when I burned disc,
so sue me if it spins 2 fast

But the disc is just a party and par-
ties weren't meant 2 last

Demos oll oround us, my mind
says prepare 2 fight

So if I gotta die, I'm ganna play
with my discs 2night

Oh, they say 2000 zera zera party
aver, oaps, out af time!

So 2night disc's gonno party like
it's 1999!

Listen 2 what I'm tryin' 2 say

Everybody, everybody say demos!

Come on now, U soy it (Demos!)

Con't run from Revenant, *no!*

Sing it 4 yaur natian, y'all!

Come on, come on, U soy

Everybody, 2 discs

Work it down 2 the ground, I'm
sayin'

Yeoh!

Mommy, why does everybody
hove o disc?

LEGEND

- DEMO
- A/V
- PATCHES
- MAPS
- TOOLS
- RATING

DISC		
PCXL	DEMO	HOMEWORLD
	DEMO	ARMORED FIST 3
	DEMO	DIRT TRACK RACING
	DEMO	ROGUE SPEAR
	DEMO	EXTREME BIKER
	DEMO	SLAVE ZERO
	DEMO	UNREAL TOURNAMENT
	DEMO	PONG
	DEMO	CARNIVORES II
	DEMO	SPEC OPS II
	DEMO	FIFA 2000
	DEMO	TOTAL ANNIHILATION: KINGDOMS
	DEMO	DUNGEON KEEPER 2
	DEMO	RADIO CONTROL RACERS
	TOOLS	GAMESPY
DISC		
EIDOS	DEMO	URBAN CHAOS
	DEMO	TOMB RAIDER: THE LAST REVELATION
	DEMO	THIEF GOLD
	DEMO	REVENANT
	DEMO	ABOMINATINON
	DEMO	CUTTHROATS
	DEMO	TOMB RAIDER II GOLD
	A/V	ANACHRONOX
	DEMO	COMMANDOS: BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY
	DEMO	FORMULA ONE
	DEMO	WARZONE 2100
	DEMO	GANGSTERS
	DEMO	TOMB RAIDER III
	DEMO	BRAVEHEART
	DEMO	DAIKATANA



Our disc comes with a scrolling interface, and is operated by moving the mouse over the screen. The bar on the left can also be used. Click left on the mouse to select items and click left again (on the image) to return to the previous screen. If you've ever installed a game, the rest is easy.

REQUIREMENTS: WINDOWS 95/98. PENTIUM 133MHZ, 32MB RAM, DIRECTX 5.0, MOUSE, 100% SOUND BLASTER COMPATIBLE CARD

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THE DISC MINI-FAQ

Q: Which did you like better? *Jedi* or *The Empire Strikes Back*?
A: *Empire.*

Q: Blasphemy!
A: *Empire* had the better ending. I mean, Luke gets his hand cut off, finds out Vader's his father, Han gets frozen and taken away by Boba Fett. It ends on such a down note. I mean, that's what life is, a series of down endings, right? All *Jedi* had was a bunch of damn Muppets.

Q: What's the answer to last month's FAQ?
A: *Ghostbusters*









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HEAVY METAL FAKK2

... AND YOU



Indulge me for a moment — it's time to climb aboard the soapbox. Pigeonholing games in to convenient genre classes is something we just have to deal with. As soon as I mention that Ritual Entertainment's *Heavy Metal: FAKK2* is — to quote its own marketing fluff — "*Tomb Raider*-esque," a familiar picture will have been conjured in your mind. Now you're expecting a third-person action adventure game. Check. Puzzles to solve. Check. Hot female lead character. Check, mate. It's all there. Thus, logic follows that *FAKK2* is a *Tomb Raider* clone.

Logic, however, is crap and fails to take into consideration the vagaries and variations that make games of similar basic style wildly different. No shit, *FAKK2* is a third-person action adventure game, but it's got sass, class, and a lot of lead character Julie Strain's ass. In look, style, and potential, it's as far removed from *Tomb Raider*'s plodding four-year old format as you could hope for. And that should be reason enough to warrant a cover story. It's amazing what you can achieve with cutting-edge technology, and a demented world of fantastic possibilities. That's what Ritual has at its disposal for the accelerated development of *FAKK2*, still on course to ship in March 2000, roughly a year since the hardcore coding work was started. As Julie herself might offer, "Eat This."



BY ROB SMITH

HEAVY METAL: KNOW WHAT IT IS?

Dismiss images of greasy, lank-haired, leather clad rockers. Cast aside more cerebral associations to lead, tungsten, or other especially heavy elements on the periodic table. This *Heavy Metal* is the cult comic creation of writer Kevin Eastman (*Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*) who in 1992 bought *Heavy Metal* magazine, and aided by artist Simon Bisley (of *Slaine*, *Judge Dredd*/*Batman* fame) continued the magazine's adult fantasy format. The original 1981 *Heavy Metal* animated movie was released on video in 1996 and to date has sold some two million copies, establishing itself as a cult classic. Back in 1993, Eastman wanted to rekindle the universe with another shot at Hollywood, this time featuring a female lead character. It's widely reported that he was having little success with conceptualizing the character until 1996 when he met model and actress Julie Strain.



Not surprisingly, he was inspired by the statuesque pin-up babe and the movie script took shape with Julie, the actress, becoming Julie, the intergalactic ass-kicking heroine.

The licensing agents were shopping the *HM* world around for video game publishing rights just as Ritual was finishing up first-person shooter *Sin*. Initial concerns about a potentially constrictive creative process (working as a third-party for someone else's universe can present problems) dissipated after a meeting with Eastman. It was simple — Ritual could come up with its own storyline, and just go nuts. They did.

Ritual's story takes place some 30 years after the end of the movie (when Julie has defeated Tyler, a god-wannabe intent on taking over her planet of Eden for its life-giving water supplies). To keep the secret of Eden's eternal youth properties, Julie has constructed beacons and a force field that designates the planet as a "Federation Assigned Ketogenic Killzone" — to the double power — essentially a "Do Not Enter Or You'll Die A Horrible Death" warning to any curious space travelers. However, new über-god Gith has detected the planet as the source of the power that he needs to kill the universal god and become all—powerful (power hungry villains).

That power — the power of the We (two ancient planet dwellers who've evolved over time to embody the essence of the planet's life-sustaining properties) — is located at the heart of the planet. As meteors rain on the shield, Julie goes to the generator to make sure it's holding, gets attacked, and realizes that she's left the city defenseless. This momentary lapse is all Gith needs to send in his forces. Aside from revenge (when Gith takes a fancy to Julie's hottie sister, Kerrie), the game becomes a race to get to the Heart of the We. Winner takes all.



"WE WANT TO HOLD TRUE TO THE PROPERTY, BUT STILL GET SOLD IN WAL-MART."
— ROB ATKINS, ART DIRECTOR



Spectacular colored lighting and excellent use of "curved" surfaces make *FAKK2* one of the best looking games we've seen — ever!

ADULT PROPERTY

Julie Strain's history of being less than fully clothed is surely part of the inspiration behind her *(FAKK2)* character. But while the movie and comic books feature plenty of naked scenes, the game's not going to be breaking decency laws (though there are plenty of scenes where Julie's character is ... umm ... a bit nippy).

Buzz at E3 emanated from Ritual's demo trailer when they unveiled one of the 28-plus levels featuring large lactating female statues. And if you don't know what that means, look it up in a dictionary. "My wife had just given birth to my kids," confessed Rob Atkins, "so I guess that's where it came from." Still, it didn't cause any problems for the Wal-Mart people.

Whether they've seen Richard "Levelord" Gray's four-penis fulcrum (and heard the accompanying, er, squeals from the surrounding female statues) is another matter.

Don't expect cheap thrills, though. Ritual is aiming for a Teen rating. Remember, however, these were the guys who included the infamous Elexis Sinclaire "pleasure" scene at the end of *Sin*, so anything's possible.



YOU KNOW IT'S GONNA BE GOOO BECAUSE ...

Trying to learn from the disappointing results of the open group design philosophy of *Sin*, Ritual has turned to project leader Tom Mustaine and art director Rob Atkins for core design. It seems to be working better. Despite starting the project in March, the proprietary technology that was created for *Sin*'s *Quake II* base (simple text-based AI scripting, camera movement, modeling, and menus) has been easily converted for use with id's *Quake III* engine.

The result is incredibly speedy gameplay design and implementation, incorporating a set of tools that will be shipped with the final product. Having seen the relative ease in which cinematic effects are created, even a code-phobe like me could likely create simple movies. As Mustaine explained, "We've got the technology, so now let's make it as bad-ass as we can."

Another time consuming element of game design is creating the lead character. That's already been done, essentially, with the *HM: FAKK2* movie and Julie Strain's own dominanting personality . This frees Ritual to spend time developing greater interactivity with the puzzles, enemies, and progression through the three acts. It also lets them pore over conundrums such as what to do about Julie's big hair. You've no doubt already peeked at the pictures, so you know the hair is big. Well, Ritual's given her a pulled-up "do" to remove the issue.

A more organized, streamlined design process is important in this project due to the use of cinematics that continually push the story forward. Starting in Act One, in the main town on Eden, Julie will be able to find out what's going on through dialog with NPCs, akin to *Half-Life*'s Barneys. Mentors help show her the way and the focus of the story (since it's uncovered slowly over the first two Acts), beginning with the mechanical-legged Otto. Spliff ... er, "cigarette" smoking Gruff takes over that role in the swamp of Act Two where there's a conscious effort to keep changing the game-play style. Act One's straightforward running around town gives way to more platform-style jumping and environment manipulation in the swamp, before reaching the cemetery and mammoth blood, fire, and water altars of Act Three. While following an essentially linear storytelling path, there will be numerous side passages that will reveal extra power-ups, weapons, and life-reviving water, should you survive the additional trials and puzzles. Finding all the water pockets on a level opens up additional secrets in the decidedly console-vein of *Mario*'s coins. The console influence also made them simplify the control structure — if it couldn't be done on an N64 or Dreamcast controller, it was ditched. As a result, the number keys will access all the inventory slots and you'll be able to hotkey weapon combos to any number for quick access.





Julie has also been given numerous movement options. A "use" key lets her grab a ledge in mid-jump, press switches, push rocks or pull levers, all manipulating the environment in some way that's not a straight hack and slash fest, or tedious lesson in lever pulling. As the lithe and limber action heroine, she can attack mid-jump, monkey swing across ravines, and climb up a vertical shaft in a horizontal position. And when she comes up against the bad guys, that's when the proverbial shit really starts flying.

Among the bizarre characters, fantastic scenery, tech buzzwords, and rolling fog (courtesy of the *Quake III* engine) lies sound gameplay concepts that draw on the finer points of other classic console and PC games. And let's face it, who isn't just a little bit excited to take control of the 6' 1" Amazonian star and watch her clean outfit get tattered and torn? ▶ p. 24



Apparently the fantasy lands visited in this game are quite chilly. We believe this is the very first polygonal poke-thru in gaming history — a finer use of polygons doesn't exist.

A FEW ANSWERS FROM KEVIN EASTMAN

DID YOU SEE A PC GAME AS AN OBVIOUS EXTENSION OF THE *HM* MOVIE/COMIC LICENSE?
Yes, I did, I think there is a very natural cross over between comics, graphic novels and games. I want game fans to find and enjoy the film, comics, and toys. Additionally I'm hopeful it will expose my fans to the game.

WHO DO YOU SEE AS THE DEMOGRAPHIC LIKELY TO BE HEADING TO THEATERS TO SEE THE MOVIE?
The main demographics for *Heavy Metal* Magazine are 16 to 35 ... about 80%. The remaining 20% are half above, and half below that.

DO YOU SEE THE POSSIBILITY OF TIGHTER CROSSOVERS BETWEEN AN ANIMATED MOVIE AND INTERACTIVE ADVENTURE?
Absolutely, 100%. I know that we'll eventually see fully interactive "Game/Movies" where nearly each time the fan "goes there" the outcome will be completely different.

HOW DIFFERENT HAS CREATING THE MOVIE BEEN FROM PRODUCING THE COMIC BOOKS?
It's a completely different beast, and I never want to do a movie the way that this one went down. Not enough control to weed out the idiots, the idiotic ideas way too many executives that need to justify a salary, and they don't get this, or don't get that, because it's not just like something else that "worked in the theaters recently" and tend to just f-k stuff up.

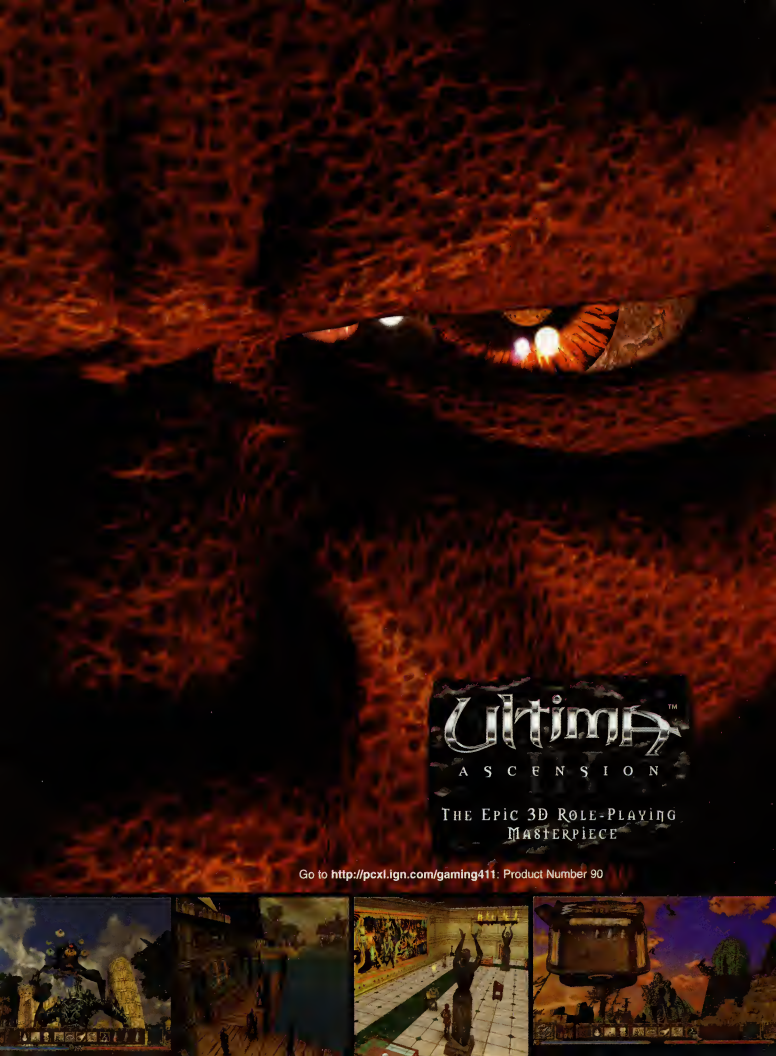
Comics are much simpler, more controllable, and take about 2500 people less to make them. They are the ultimate director's chair — I control all the lights, camera, action.

WHAT'S BEEN YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE GAME PROJECT? WHAT DO YOU SUSPECT IT WILL BE LIKE TO CONTROL YOUR LEAD CHARACTER (AND WIFE), RATHER THAN CREATING THE SITUATIONS AS YOU SEE FIT AS A STORY WRITER?
It wasn't too far into the project when I just stood back and watched the beast unfold. Cool shit ... times ten. I think it will be pretty trippy to play a game inspired by "the little woman" (she loves it when I say that) and I know she'll get a kick out of it as well!

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STRAINING AT THE SEAMS



"Queen of the B movies" is the tagline coined by *Premiere* magazine that is most widely used to categorize Julie Strain. She's appeared in over 70 films (from *Repossessed* to *Lingerie Kickboxer* to *Bimbo Movie Bash*), and is the host of Playboy Channel's "Sex Court." She's done countless photo shoots, emerging as a *Penthouse* Pet in 1991 and Pet of the Year in 1993. For our purposes, she's the inspiration for the lead character in writer Kevin Eastman's animated adult fantasy, *Heavy Metal*.

Sure, the game's got a real buzz behind it, and that's why we're doing the big story, but the big personality (and big figure) of Julie Strain was a vital ingredient. So in the course of checking out the background to the game, we got to check-in with the real-life *Heavy Metal* chick. Gentlemen, hang on to your joysticks. This is Julie Strain ...

DO YOU GET A KICK OUT OF BEING CONTROLLED BY PLAYERS, IN AN INTERACTIVE GAMING SENSE, IN THE GAME?
It's a kick to be controlled by young boys and their joystick. I'm like a stallion and they have the reins. Their skill will decide whether I buck them off or take 'em for the ride of their lives. Metaphorically speaking, of course.

WHAT'S BEEN YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE GAME PROJECT? HAVE YOU BEEN DOING ANY MOTION-CAPTURED MOVES FOR THE GAME PROGRAMMERS TO ANIMATE THE GAME?
I don't do motion-capture for the game, but I've captivated those who are creating motion with my real life spider-like body and moves. I have yet to do the voice, but I will, and this game just bridges with the movie in feeling and momentum.

WHAT'S BEEN YOUR FAVORITE JOB?
My favorite job ever was modeling for Helmet Newton, the famous black and white nude photographer. I felt like a supermodel — the shots made it into his book, and mine, *It's Only Art If It's Well Hung*. Yes, that's my first book title. I worked for him again with my fave band, INXS, and am on their career video box cover and inside.

HAVE YOU PLAYED MANY GAMES? WHAT DO YOU THINK OF LARA CROFT? AND HOW BADLY WOULD YOU KICK HER ASS IN A CAT FIGHT?
I haven't played a game since *Columns* [*Tetris* clone - Ed] ... I got too busy being subject matter instead of a consumer who gets to "do" activities. I've seen photos of Lara Croft — she'd look like a prune when I was done with her ... or maybe I'd keep her captive and use her as my slave ... yeah, that's it.

WHO'S BEEN YOUR BIGGEST CREATIVE INFLUENCE?
My biggest creative influence has been T.H.C. [If you don't understand, go read *High Times*] No one was really there for me in that sense. Through fashion mags

ONE BAD-ASS FIGHTING FEMME

AMBIDEXTRIOUS AMAZONIAN

What is it? Ritual is creating an innovative combat method that lets Julie wield weapons in both hands, and in any combination — say, a sword in left, crossbow in right, two swords, two guns, or one uber, two-handed gun
Example: One melee attacker could be kept at bay with a shield while a projectile shooting indigenous plant fires missiles. Block the missiles with the shield and the impact will knock Julie off her feet, and trying to slash the melee guy is having little effect. What does a girl do? Use one hand to attack the projectile lobber while the other uses a sheild on the melee guy. Then turn both hands on remaining baddie

FINISHING MOVES

What is it? Much like the classic gory Mortal Kombat series, HM has a variety of finishing moves that can be accessed through different button combinations
Example: If Julie's water meter is full, and she lands three successive hits (which are animated as a right slash, left slash, then forward lunge in an impressively destructive flurry of metal and flesh), then hits a back, back combo, she'll do a *Mortal Kombat*-style finishing move (such as impaling the recipient on the spiked armored kneepad)

STRATEGIC COMBAT

What is it? With the focus on the single-player game and story (multiplayer is unlikely to ship with the finished game) the combat and puzzles need to be deep. Ritual has managed to put some strategy in the combat
Example: One early boss requires Julie to distract its attention with a sling shot, place a fuse in a pile of shit (no kidding), and detonate it from a safe distance. This has to be repeated four times, but is made successively harder by the creature changing its attack method after each "hit." Console-style boss encounters haven't been done right in years, and this should be a welcome sight

"COMBAT WILL MIX TEKKEN WITH QUAKE AND WITH TOMB RAIDER."
— TOM MUSTAINE, PROJECT LEADER





Subtle imagery like this "man eater" add a rich sexual subtext to the game.

and *Playboy* and *Penthouse* I was motivated — and with a body of 6' 1" I just wanted to share it and let new concepts roll over me and reinvent what I'm sharing. I'm very open to ideas — I'm doing me as Marilyn Monroe now, just finished Bettie Page ['50s pin-up].

THAT RED OUTFIT ... WHAT DID YOU THINK ABOUT IT? (TO SEE THE RED OUTFIT JUST GLANCE OVER TO THE RIGHT)
That red outfit was HOT! Even better without the red body suit, if ya know what I'm saying. I think I ripped it off my body after that final photo shoot



WHAT'S THE SCARIEST ENCOUNTER WITH A FAN?
I had a man jump on my bed with a screwdriver at my throat. I had to fight him off with my bare hands ... I'm alive today. Not sure if he was a fan or not, but he is now ...

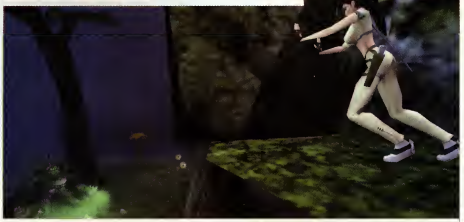
WHAT'S BEEN YOUR FAVORITE PROJECT YOU'VE WORKED ON AND WHY?
Photography has taken over my life. I shoot all the playmates and half the adult stars for the website and my next art book ... "It's All Fun And Games Until Somebody Loses An Eye." Check out www.juliestrain.com by Pan 2000 to see my stable!

IS IT POSSIBLE, IN YOUR OPINION, TO PLAY COMPUTER GAMES AND STILL RETAIN SOME SEMBLANCE OF COOL?
Yeah. You can play games and still be cool. You can use that



hand agility to satisfy your chick after you slay a dragon. It's a perfect combo.

WE GET THE GAG, BUT WHAT WOULD YOU SUGGEST TO YOUR MOTHER (OR MY MOTHER) WHAT THE INITIALS *FAKKs* STAND FOR?
Federation Assigned Ketogenic Killzone — Double. Or for you I'll make it Fantasy and Kink Koncept ... nah.



Pushing rocks does more than solve puzzles — it also flattens them!

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Sims of the Sims

BY CHUCK OSBORN

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SIM-PEOPLE STOP BEING POLITE AND START BEING REAL?

"Rub your back, Sandra?"

"Mmmmm ... Michelle, you ample-textured temptress. Don't stop!"

"Tee-hee!"

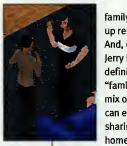
"I've never done anything like this before ... it feels so naughty, but oh so right."

"Kiss me, Sondro!"

"Yes! Oh, Yes!" Sondro purred.

The daydream ends abruptly. As images of tiny lesbians dance in my head, I remember where I am — in the Maxis offices, watching a demonstration of their upcoming game, *The Sims*. For one beautiful, fleeting moment, I'm transported to a different world — one where sexy Michelle Pfeiffer lookalikes French-kiss mini-Sandra Bullocks — and I've just witnessed the gaming world's first lesbian kiss. Their conversation may have been unintelligible sim-speak, but I knew what they were really saying. After all — they're my lesbians ...

THE GAME







Well, technically, they're Will Wright's lesbians. The creator of the original *SimCity* and, most recently, *SimCity 3000*, Will Wright first conceived of *The Sims* seven years ago as a way of building a more intimate (in more ways than one) sim community than the impersonal one in *SimCity*. Noting the popularity of home design software packages, he thought that gamers might be interested in designing not just a physical house, but everything that goes inside — including the people themselves. No ultimate goals, levels, or missions, just a slice of life in miniature form. If the premise sounds a little familiar, that may be because it is — a similar, yet more simplistic game called *Little Computer People* appeared for the Commodore 64 in the early '80s. But we bet that nobody back then was thinking about lesbian kisses (except maybe lesbians) until Will Wright began to seriously develop his idea about three years ago.

The Sims follows the many loves and lives of a neighborhood of up to 10 houses. First job is to create a family to take up residence. And, unlike Jerry Falwell's definition of "family," any mix of people can end up sharing a home — a lone bachelor, the traditional nuclear family of mom, pop, and 2.5 children, a military platoon, or something right out of *Penthouse Forum* (or maybe *Utah*). Purely physical attributes like skin color (light, medium, and dark), gender (sorry, hermaphrodites, just male and female), and appearance (face and hair) are selectable from the start, as well as personality factors such as shyness, playfulness, and disposition. And, in a groundbreaking move for the video game industry, sexual orientation is adaptable and largely determined by the player's actions.

Once you've created your future residents, it's time for them to buy a house. You can build anything from a hole-in-the-wall to a mansion from the ground up, using the easy-to-use drag and drop design interface (which surprisingly doesn't borrow any *SimCity* code). But don't go crazy and spend all of your character's cash without leaving anything for food or belongings.



The easy-to-use interface lets you design the perfect woman — something men have wanted to do for years.

Furnishings can be plain or ritzy, ranging from a simple chair and table to a lavish living room set, but the better the quality, the higher the price, and also the greater the impact on the Sim people. The same goes for appliances — refrigerators and microwaves are necessary for Sims to cook, but a Jacuzzi and wetbar are probably unnecessary extravagances for the beginner. Over 200 objects will ship with the game, and a new one will appear every week on their website, www.maxis.com, with user-designed ones to surely follow.

Character reactions to their gadgets are embedded into an object's code, allowing Sims to instinctively know how to use it. Downloading, installing, and, with practice, creating new ones should be a breeze. And if you forget to build a bathroom, you'll regret it later when Sims start peeing on the floor.

But life within each house doesn't stop when you save and leave. As part of a dynamic neighborhood, virtual neighbors can visit each other, establish relationships, and even fall in love. That's why one of the most important objects in a Sim household is the telephone — it lets Sims invite friends over, order food (yes, Sims can order pizza) and services, receive job offers, or chat. Socializing is the backbone of the game, with the number of friends your Sims have helping further their happiness, and even their careers.



Barbie, eat your heart out! A fabulous dream house can be yours for a lot less than you'd have to pay in real life.

WORKING FOR A SIM LIVING

Yes, that's right ... you've gotta have a J-O-B or you'll end up D-O-A. Sim-money doesn't grow on sim-trees, you know. There are 10 different career tracks covering everything from law enforcement and extreme sports to entertainment and crime. And, as in real life, it's not what you know, but who you know that's important in reaching the top of some professions. For example, politics and business careers require ambitious Sims to know and be liked by as many of their neighbors as possible, attained through frequent parties and phone contact (and the careful ... ahh ... "handling" of interns, we suppose).

Jobs in the military and food service might not demand such high social obligations, but there isn't a single career ladder that rewards a player for making like a hermit. Naturally, you start out at the bottom and work your way up. For example, aspiring cops start out as lowly security guards and rise through the ranks of law enforcement until they eventually become ... well, telling would ruin the surprise, but if you've played *SimCity 3000*, you may have seen him fly by. Likewise, criminals start off as petty thieves with the goal of someday becoming a criminal mastermind. What? You say people play games to have fun, not pimp out fries at burger joints and pay bills. You do enough of that in real life? Don't worry, Sims work off-screen. After you find a job via newspaper or computer (where you can also play games), all you have to do is make sure they catch the carpool. One absence won't hurt, but chronic absenteeism results in a pink slip or demotion (See Ed Lee for example).



And if you'd like your Sims to continue living in the manner in which they've become accustomed, a steady income is a must. By maintaining a well-rounded social life and a positive outlook, Wright estimates that a Sim should hit the height of its profession in about 100 hours of gameplay. If that sounds fast, it really isn't — each Sim day is only 15 minutes of real time.

Although your family of Sims may hire a maid if they can afford one, cleaning is a chore that takes place onscreen. Empty pizza boxes empty beer bottles, dirty plates, and spills accumulate quickly if you don't tell your Sim slobs to pick up after themselves. And if you haven't adequately designed the kitchen, like including a sink or dishwasher, don't be surprised when Sims start leaving plates and glasses on the floor. They're pretty smart for little computer people, but they can only work with what you give them.



Do Sims dream of electric sheep? No, they dream about world peace, nukes, the weather, and even loved ones.



The Heaven's Gate cult? No, they're too well dressed. But we have noticed the one in the middle looks a lot like Rob Smith, and Rob's been talking about UFOs lately. Hmmm ...

WE'D LIKE TO SEE

An expansion pack or sequel to *The Sims* is a long way off, but here are a few additions we'd like to see that'll spice up the game

MULTIPLAYER
While *The Sims* is a single-player game, Will Wright hinted that an expansion pack with massively multiplayer support might be in the future. Imagine your neighborhood becoming part of a virtual city (maybe a *SimCity?*) and interacting with other user-controlled Sims online.

PETS
An entire neighborhood of people and nobody has a dog, cat, or even a goldfish? Not very likely, we say

PESTS
An entire neighborhood of people and nobody has rats, roaches, or even an insurance salesman? Not very likely

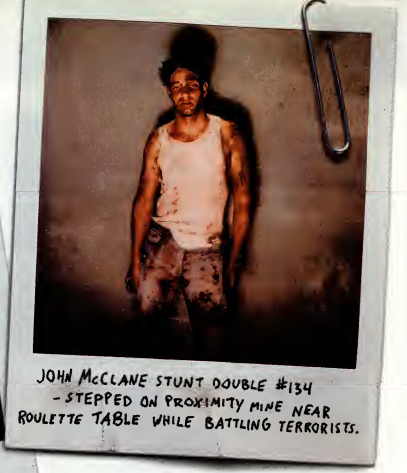
DRUGS
We want to build a crackhouse, dammit! And there's something really funny about watching one of your Sims fall asleep in its own filth and get busted by "the man"

WHORES
So, you've got public services like maids and firemen, but a Sim can't just call up a hooker for a good time? What's up with that?

RELIGION
The Sims is religion-free to avoid "favoritism," but real life isn't like that. Besides, don't just include the major religions that, for the most part, are pretty boring — let's see snake-charmers, doomsday cults, and Scientologists. Pass the Kool-Aid!

JELLO WRESTLING
Well, can you think of one good reason why it shouldn't be included?

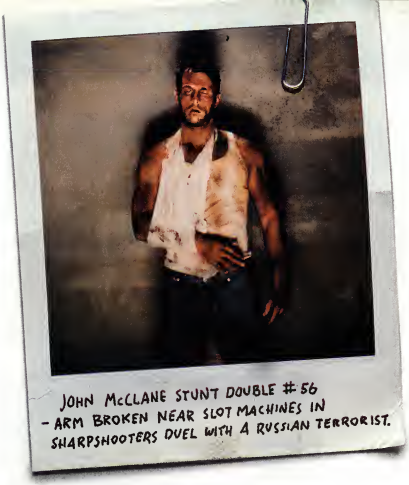




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SIMS AFTER DARK







Behind the sweet, innocent façade of saccharine-sweet "Brady Bunch"-style screenshots, isn't there a little bit of "Sex In The SimCity" lurking somewhere? You betcha ... because every town has a seamy underbelly, even in *The Sims*. Well, maybe not exactly seamy ... but when it comes to wholesome living, there's a right way — and a Wright way.

"When I'm feeling sadistic, I'll build a wall around a person so they'll die from starvation."

— Will Wright

Your Sims can't kill each other, but they definitely can die. Sometimes it's an accident — Sims with low repair skills can electrocute themselves attempting to fix electrical appliances or a house fire might wipe out an entire family — but players cause most deaths, either on purpose or out of neglect. For example, not feeding your Sims will eventually result in starvation as Will Wright gleefully demonstrated by luring one unsuspecting Sim outside and then encircling him with a tall wall, leaving the confused Sim to slowly waste away and die. All right, that's our kinda fun.

Death isn't the end of a character's story, though. After a Sim dies, it's immediately replaced by either a tombstone or urn depending on whether it died outside or inside. Family members and love interests will mourn at the gravesite for several days afterward and forget their usual routine. At midnight, the deceased may return as a ghost to haunt the living and generally creep everyone out.

Still, it's the activities of the living that provides the most titillation (or as much titillation as you can get from a computer game, anyway). Do they get naked? Yes, they take showers and use the toilet, but don't expect The Playboy Channel. Private parts (a.k.a. "the good stuff") are discreetly covered by big, chunky pixels that make the naked Sim look like they've just been arrested on "COPS." Nudity is most frequently seen in the bathroom, but an adventurous Sim may lose the bathing suit when entering a hot tub ... and with any luck, others joining will follow suit.

In a throwback to the old '70s "Wonder Woman" series, Sims get nekkid and change clothes (or skins) by twirling around. (We felt great embarrassment on the part of male Sims forced to undergo this indignity.) But ... and this is a big Jennifer Lopez-sized but ... we expect user-designed skins to flood the web and some of the first will undoubtedly be nude skins. (You perverts out there know who you are — so what are waiting for? Get started, already!)

In fact, one Maxis employee told us that he'd already hacked into the game to let one of his male Sims become a cross dresser by just switching a file name here and there. Eeow!



A huge block party or the world's most liberal convent? Even we're not quite sure.



Sim Leonardo DiCaprio at the Playboy Mansion. Proof that even a runty geek can impress chicks if he has a hot tub and a hit movie.



Burn, baby, burn. Firemen put out "accidental" fires.



WHAT ABOUT MAKING THE SIM WITH TWO BACKS?

So, do they do *it*? Again, if you're looking for porn, you've come to the wrong place. Sims can flirt, compliment, hug, joke, tickle, and even play pranks on one another, altering their friendship status and maybe, just maybe, fall in love (represented by a heart icon). In fact, you can build a large family with just one Sim by having him meet a neighbor Sim, fall in love, move in together, and begin having children. Just like real life, however, love triangles may come about due to unrequited feelings, and a Sim might receive a slap in the face if he gets too fresh.

But when it gets down to hanky-panky, a smoldering kiss and a back rub is as far as you'll get. (We're disappointed, too.) Characters in love may sleep in the same bed together, but you can come a-knockin' cuz nothin's a-rockin.'

Romance blooms between Sim couples due to similar personalities and the player's skill in mixing flirtation and affection. Still, even debauched Sims sure look like they're having a good time. Set up a "Three's Company" situation with one guy and two (or 200) women in the same house and you'll start calling him The World's Luckiest Sim.



The upshot of the flirtation, and progression towards Sim family, means that there are two ways to get baby Sims — the old-fashioned way (represented by kissing) or adoption, which is open to anybody (including our lip-locking lesbian couple). Sim babies grow to the point of adolescence, but since nobody ever grows old in *The Sims*, they don't reach adulthood. And (we asked) kids can't "play doctor" no matter what you remember doing during recess.

Personal clashes may lead to two Sims hating one another. Fights can break out, but tiffs between the sexes are limited to baby slaps due to the volatile firestorm surrounding the existence of domestic violence in a video game. Feuding Sims will be generally uncooperative towards one another, not visiting each other's homes when invited and avoiding conversation.

As management games go, *The Sims* is shaping up to be one of the most impressive we've seen yet. The sheer complexity of the project, along with the promise of tons of user-generated skins, objects, and textures (and some very warped imaginations), definitely adds this title to the top of our "most-anticipated" list for Spring 2000.



"Sandra Loves Michelle." This is the series we're pitching to Fox for next season. No social commentary, just girl-on-girl action.











The Art of Flirtation — the personal interaction menu gives players a range of choices. Rush things and risk a fight or go slow and get lucky. And if they get lucky, so do you.

THE SIM-SONS

A few sim games we'd like to see ...

SIMPRISON
Micromanage a correctional facility full of prisoners, guards, and a lot of pent up rage. The most fun you'll have with anal rape since ... well, probably the only fun you'll ever have with anal rape. Ow

SIMSPLEEN
All you *ER* fans, manage the body's most magical and mysterious organ, the spleen. Adventure inside the exciting, dangerous inner sanctum of the gastrointestinal system ... if you're brave enough to accept the challenge

SIM ROBIN WILLIAMS' AGENT
An offer comes in: Robin is needed to play a loveable, zany character who makes his own rules even when they fly in the face of straightlaced authority figures, eventually winning out in the end. Do you accept? Of course you do

SIMPC
Spend hours and hours tweaking your system, managing files, and upgrading hardware until you have the best system on the block. It's a lot like what you do already, but this time it's supposed to be fun

SIMSIMIAN
Chimps and lots of 'em. We have no idea what the gameplay would be like, but damn those little hairy bastards sure are funny

Quake III Arena™ available now.
Screenshots courtesy of id Software,™ Inc.



the "kill-zone" as seen by a standard 350 dpi mouse.



the "kill-zone" as seen by the 3000 dpi Razer Boomslang.

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starring:

Jamie Foxx as Asheron
Tommy Davidson as Rushon
Vivica A. Fox as Lysterine
Tamala Jones as Seccretia



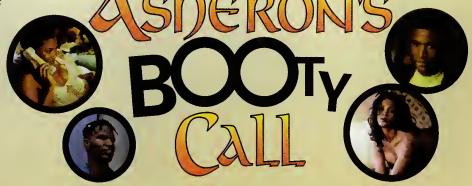
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2

WHO ARE THEY?

Based in Austin, Warren Spector's team's stayed away from the shenanigans that have turned the development house into a source of industry jokes. Spector's resume includes *System Shock* and *Ultima Underworld*. This is something every gamer should be excited about.

Deus Ex

Best game of 2000 — and this time I mean it

Before we begin I must make a couple of things clear. First, I am not on crack. Secondly, I am not Ion Storm's editorial bitch. My suggestion that *Daikatana* was going to be the best game of 1999 (**PCXL** February '99?) may have been a complete brain fart (though I defer any abuse until I have been proven incorrect — which has yet to happen). But after witnessing *Deus Ex*, I am more than comfortable to stick my neck and damaged reputation out and state quite categorically that this is going to be a staggering critical success when it's released around March, 2000.

It's tragic to suggest that the cerebral title and the game's reluctance to be handily pigeonholed in a consumer-friendly genre may damage its marketability to Johnny Public. But if you're reading this, you've already got a head start. And this is why it's going to be so damn great:

Deus Ex is an action-RPG-adventure. That means you play a single character who develops skills and gains augmenting objects throughout the course of the game, you shoot a bunch of stuff, and you uncover plot, counter plot and conspiracy. You do this to the impressive aesthetic strains of the *Unreal* engine, through several real world locations unearthing more paranoia-soaked conspiracy theories than even the Horsemen of the Apocalypse are privy to.

JC Denton is your name (you can also add your real name, which may crop up later in the game, posing the question "How the hell does this guy know my real name?") and you're an operative for the anti-terrorist organization UNATCO. At the outset you get 2400 skill points (the exact details may change in the several months of balancing currently underway) to assign several different skills such as computer hacking and weapon type specialization. You're also a nano-technology enhanced operative, which opens up a world of character development possibilities as you choose to enhance sight or jumping ability for example, through the four levels from Untrained to Master.

Augmentations can be found at various times through the game (you start with two), and once you've assigned one to a specific slot, you can't remove it. Your body is divided into three torso slots, one arm, one leg, one eye, one cranial and one subdermal.

In RPG fashion, you gain skill points by completing objectives. Spector is keen to point out that you don't actually achieve any major character development boost by killing people. "You don't have to kill anybody," he told **PCXL**, "but if you do, it should be an unpleasant experience." Of

▶ p. 46

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Ion Storm
PUBLISHER → Eidos
RELEASE DATE → March 2000
API SUPPORT → D3D, Glide

INTEREST GAUGE

INTERESTED — EXCITED — AFFIXED

THE HYPE

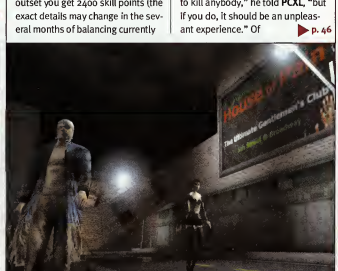
Since the game doesn't fit easily in to any pigeonhole, it's difficult to understand how great it is going to be.

THE HURDLE

Is it an action-adventure RPG, an immersive sim, a James Bond-like thriller? If it's tough to categorize , it will be tough to sell to Johnny QuickBuy.

THE HIT

Warren Spector's credentials are flawless, his game design and concept is fascinating, and he's assembled the team and technology to pull it off.



"Excuse me, could you tell me the way to the S & M Ball?" Actually, we'd skip the Ball and go right to the "Gentleman's Club." Because here at PCXL, we are all gentlemen, of course.

IT'S ALL IN THE WEB

We know that there's nothing that can't be found on the web, but perhaps there are things that shouldn't' be found there (like ...) How about security? Did you realize that the government Defense Intelligence Agency has a website? Check out these organizations to see if they're working for you (or to find application forms for employment)

DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WWW.DIA.MIL
WHAT THEY SAY → You'll need to submit a urine test to detect drug use, and once employed, will be subjected to lie detector testing at irregular intervals
WHAT THEY "REALLY" MEAN → If you're not smart enough to fool a lie detector or submit someone elses urine, then you don't belong in the DIA

NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY
WWW.NSA.GOV
WHAT THEY SAY → Number one reason cited for working there: "It's a great place to work." Thanks, big brother
WHAT THEY "REALLY" MEAN → it's also the only place in the United States that they don't monitor 24 hours a day

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WWW.CIA.GOV
WHAT THEY SAY → How about being a Leadership Analyst, creating psychological profiles of various world political, religious and even cultural leaders, so the U.S. counterparts know how best to deal with them (or figure out which are the unstable puppets with an itchy trigger finger hanging over the nuke button)
WHAT THEY "REALLY" MEAN → "Psychological profiles" is really secret CIA talk for "assassinate"

UN ANTI-TERRORIST COALISTION
WWW.UNATCO.COM
WHAT THEY SAY → Evidently very tough with access to the intelligence division being by invitation only. Of course, you should really check out the kids page to find out exactly what terrorism is about and how bad it is!
WHAT THEY "REALLY" MEAN → Don't call us, we'll call you

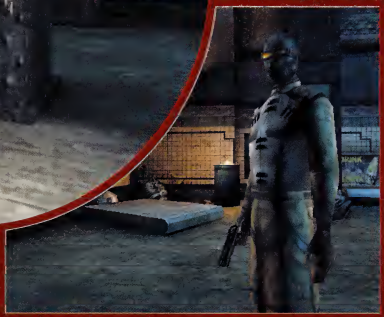
NATIONAL COUNTERINTELLIGENCE CENTER
WWW.NACIC.GOV
WHAT THEY SAY → Coordinating the U.S. Government's efforts to identify and counter foreign intelligence threats is a tough career, and as such you'll only get in on assignment from the CIA, FBI, DIA, military or other similar organizations
WHAT THEY "REALLY" MEAN → They're so sneaky, even they don't know what the hell they are doing

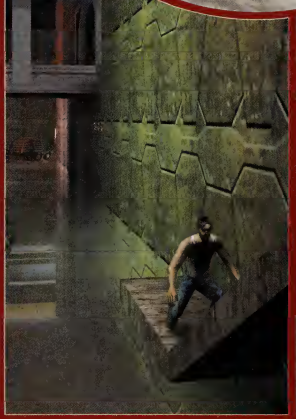
Deus Ex Gallery



Detail is everything in the level design. Racing around a market in Hong Kong, you may notice one of the gross meats swinging of its own accord, indicating that someone passed through there and touched it just moments earlier. It's this kind of pacing, and environment manipulation (piling boxes, pushing objects, using terminals and machines) that give *Deus Ex* its believable near future feel.





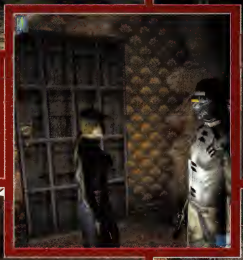




Somewhat *X-Files*-like, in *Deus Ex* a Gray Death plague has erupted on mankind ...



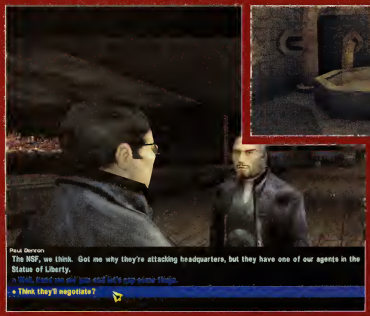




it's all a conspiracy of course. When newspaper reports implicate you as a terrorist, and random people just so happen to know your "real" name, it's enough to create a foreboding tingle. Not everyone is your friend, and as Spector revealed: "There are 3-5 NPCs that I want you to HATE." Trust no one.

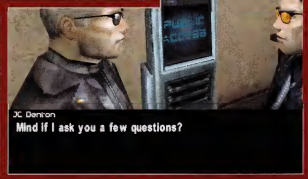












... and the Ambrosia countersgent is immediately available only to the wealthy. Conspiracy?

FIVE QUESTIONS

ONE OF THE GODS OF GAME DESIGN, WARREN SPECTOR, CAME DOWN TO OUR LEVEL FOR A FEW.

Q: Since you've got a lot to say about game design and direction, what do you think are the best current examples of "great" design? Any forthcoming ones you know about that get you excited?

A: Assuming you're NOT talking board games, I'd have to say *Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past* (SNES) was right up there. I really cared about the characters and their fates. The learning curve was perfect and the level of challenge was always just right. (If I ever meet Shigeru Miyamoto I'll probably melt into a little puddle of goo) On the PC side, I think Doug Church's work on level four of *Ultima Underworld* was brilliant. No other game experience has made me feel quite so much like I was doing something epic and important. As far as upcoming games go, it's hard to argue with Peter Molyneux when it comes to god games and Will Wright on the sim side.

Q: What's the craziest millennial theory you've uncovered during the research for *Deus Ex*?

A: Well, it isn't millenial but the weirdest conspiracy theory we uncovered has to be the bit about Dwight Eisenhower forging a treaty with three alien races at war in our universe, keeping we puny Earthlings neutral. All subsequent presidents have known about and honored the treaty, which allows the aliens to abduct a certain number of people every year for experimentation and to kidnap a certain number of children each year for food. One recent president took things a step further — he had the Freemasons tunnel below the Denver airport and build abducted-baby-holding pens there. Sort of fast food for hungry, human-eating aliens, I guess. That one was so wacky we didn't dare put it in the game ... If you want information on conspiracy stuff on the web, check out:
www.parascope.com
www.ufomind.com
www.conspire.com
www.trufax.org
— if you dare ...

Q: Is the truth out there?

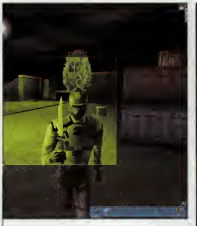
A: Nope. There is no truth — there's only what "they" want you to believe ... Get over it.

Q: *Deus Ex*: The pinnacle of ... ?

A: How about we just say "pinnacle of unpronounceable names" (a market ION Storm has cornered). Let's leave it at that. You guys, and players, of course, can decide what *Dues Ex* is after we ship.

Q: Who does the best impersonation of John Romero in your office?

We just call John Romero "inimitable" around here!





▶ P. 45 course, there will be killing, but the style in which you do it will be a significant element of how you've created your character. The branching dialog paths where you choose what to do tell the game what kind of person you are.

Rather than shooting your way out of situations, there will be a vast number of options for completing the numerous puzzles, as you move from the starting location of New York through Hong Kong, Washington (including the White House), Vanderburg, and Area 51. "There is literally not a single thing in the entire game that you can't interact with," Spector explained, "so every puzzle has multiple logical solutions." Given the breadth of character development through the skill system and augmentations, the designers have to cover every conceivable solution in their planning, and it's this element that the team will spend the last four to five months of development perfecting.

Utilizing the established *Unreal* code allowed the programmers to have the core game engine running within a couple of months. Level design is being finalized and will be essentially code complete by the time you read this.

So why the delay until March? It's purely for balancing issues. Getting past a security camera could have multiple outcomes: You could be spotted and bring every terrorist running for a massive shootout (that you may win), or you could hack the computer and sneak past (leaving the terrorists still walking their patrols). Or, you could pick up a box and push it past the camera, crouching behind it as you go (one false move and you're toast).

In this real world setting, the team has called upon every single wacko conspiracy theory circling the most secretive depths of the Internet. They're out to make you as paranoid as they are ("There are some guys on the team who are getting pretty weird," 'fessed Spector). As the plot progresses, you'll end up fighting for UNATCO against the terrorists, then be forced to switch sides, and ultimately make decisions about who, exactly, are the good guys.

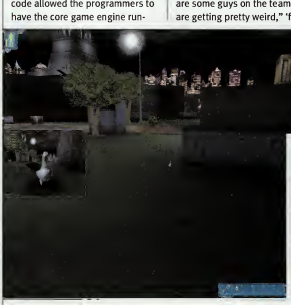
Spector revealed. "We're trying to take the next step in game design. If you see stuff, you can use it. If there's a book shelf, there are books on it, and you can read them. If there's an answering machine, there may be messages on it." This also provides a great opportunity to include a multitude of background information that you can choose to ignore, or digest thoroughly and become forever embroiled in the paranoid cult of conspiracy.

And vitally, you can always turn to drink. While the booze vision effect hadn't been finalized, they were also working on the crack effect, as Spector was quick to point out "there's no benefit to doing crack."

So there you have it. I couldn't have said it better myself.

—ROB SMITH *is paranoid that people will remember what he said about* Daikatana. *But he really means it about* Deus Ex

A night light lets you know you're about to get your throat slit in clear green glowing color.





Stop, or the pigeon gets it! Note the pigeon's health totals.



Know when to call in sick.

Go ahead – plan to stay home the day that hot new release comes out. Because we take new titles as seriously as you do – and we have the buying power to get them for you. You just found www.ebworld.com, the planet's most reliable source for games, guides and accessories at great prices – plus up-to-the-minute release dates, online news and reviews from fellow gamers. (What more would you expect from the people who brought you Electronics Boutique?) Whatever you need, know you'll score it here. We've got the cure, man.



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Go to http://pcxl.ign.com/gaming411: Product Number 135

MESSIAH

EXORCISE YOUR RIGHT OF POSSESSION



How does a pudgy Messiah with only a diaper for defense find out the source of evil on earth?



Possession... Naked and defenseless, Bob uses his only weapon and takes possession of the first character he sees, a worker.



Bob, recognizable by the halo, realizes that the worker does not have security access to leave the room. So to cause a commotion, "Bob" lowers a 5-ton tank on unsuspecting worker.



Then he can possess the medic sent in to aid the crushed worker, medics have security access.



Now through a warehouse door, Bob still needs access to the lab where he believes he'll find some answers.



Dumping the medics body, Bob realizes that Cops have access to the lab.



Cops also have laser sighted GUNS! How heavenly!



While being scanned at the door Bob attracts some unwanted attention.





After seeing the awesome power displayed by the behemoth, who needs a cop. Bob takes possession of the Behemoth and is ready to KICK SOME ASS!

The huge 15 foot genetically engineered Behemoth rips the cop's heart out and like a rag doll tosses his lifeless body across the room.



WWW.MESSIAH.COM

END OF THE WORLD PROMOTION

The end of the millennium is upon us. The two thousandth year after Christ. Who better to celebrate it with than "Bob", God's favorite cherub?

Where is the biggest new years celebration every year? New York City, Times Square. Shiny, Interplay and Messiah want to send one lucky winner, and friend, to the biggest party on Earth. Witness, first hand, the apocalypse. If it is the end, you might as well be partying when it happens!

Visit www.messiah.com/contest.htm to register for your chance to win! Or send a self addressed stamped envelope to:
Messiah: End of the World Sweepstakes, P. O. Box 36,
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No purchase necessary. To enter the Sweepstakes, visit www.messiah.com/contest.htm and follow the instructions for entering. Or send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Messiah: End of the World Sweepstakes, P. O. Box 36, Ojai, California 93024-0036. Limit one entry per person. Sweepstakes begins on 1/4/1999 and ends on 3/31/1999. Winners will be selected on or about 4/15/1999 by a random drawing from all eligible entries received. Prize consists of one (1) trip for two (2) persons to New York City, including round-trip coach airfare, two (2) nights' accommodations at a hotel selected by Sponsor, and $500 spending money. Prize is non-transferable. Prize must be taken by 12/31/1999. Winner of prize will be required to sign and return an affidavit of eligibility and liability/publicity release within 14 days of notification or an alternate winner will be selected. Winner is responsible for all taxes associated with prize receipt. Sponsor reserves the right to substitute a prize of equal or greater value if the prize described is unavailable. Void where prohibited by law. Sponsor: Interplay Productions, 16815 Von Karman Avenue, Irvine, CA 92606.

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"What will revolutionize the gaming world... is Messiah's unique style and more than a little disturbing gameplay." - PC ACCELERATOR

"It's this act (possession) of not just taking on a body, but an actual character that makes the game so unique." - CORE MAGAZINE

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- INTENDED FOR MATURE AUDIENCES ONLY -

DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD

HISTOGRAM AVG. SCORE [-]

10
8
6
4
2

WHO ARE THEY?

Visiware, born in July '94, is made up of a team of 42 employees with more than 12 years of experience in the video game industry. This is the first big game from the relatively unknown company. Their vision: A coherent universe, where the game spirit, advanced technologies, and scenario enable an award-winning game — let's hope so.

Planet of the Apes

More fun and adventure with those damn dirty apes

It's a familiar story ... Far in the future, boy goes into space, boy crash lands on an uncharted world, boy gets captured by damn dirty apes who rule a planet where humans are considered low grade dirt labor, boy gets freed by a mysterious ally. And so it goes.

The original *Plant of the Apes* movie, now celebrating its 30th anniversary, is considered a sci-fi classic, and was followed up by consistently worse sequels. The game itself is a third-person action adventure, but instead of taking the role of Charlton Heston's Taylor character, you are a similarly manly man named Ulysses. While the game takes the basic premise from the original movie, it incorporates concepts, characters, and story ideas from the various *Ape* films and the original book "Le Planete des Singes" by Pierre Boulle, the source of all this simian madness.

"In the book, the level of the ape society was mirroring the '20s or '30s, so the gadgetry, equipment, clothing, etc., was more advanced than the film itself, but not *that* advanced, relatively speaking," Cos Lazouras, *Planet of the Apes*' producer, explains. "One of the sub-plots in the game reveals that there is an ape government conspiracy much in the vein of conspiracy theories today which talk about the U.S. government getting advanced technology from aliens.

"The difference is that, in the game, all the advanced technology comes from the central government's persistent scouring of the forbidden zones, which are actually old human city remains. These archaeological digs uncover all manner of things such as weaponry, vehicles and industrial equipment. Since these finds categorically prove the existence of intelligent humans, the ape government is keeping it very quiet. The game's sub-plot allows us to have a realistic reason as to why military gorillas sometimes carry laser weapons."

To convey all this ape mayhem, the 3D environments will be completely realtime rendered (similar to *Nocturne*). The developers are aiming for a movie cam system that will provide cinematic cuts, pans, zooms, and tracking to give it an authentic movie feel. Although, you have to wonder if the feel of some of the later (even campier) movies is really an ideal thing to mimic ...

Since it's an action-adventure, combat plays an important role, and Ulysses goes into battle with guns, melee weapons, and his bare (err ... simian) hands and feet. There are even special use moves such as sneaking up behind someone and slitting their throat. The auto-targeting system will lock on to the nearest enemy, then you can move the target lock from enemy to enemy with the press of a button. There's due to be an extensive range of weapons found or taken from an enemy after defeating them, including a machete, rifle, shotgun, laser gun, and club.

Ulysses himself can be controlled in three different modes to handle various situations — normal, stealth (to sneak about and avoid confrontation), and athletic (for those times when you feel the need to display your buff and bold self). There's even a noise level meter that lets you keep track of how stealthy your feet really are, and enemies will react to sounds







Little known fact: Bad posture was the undoing of the Apes.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Visiware
PUBLISHER → Fox Interactive
RELEASE DATE → Spring 2000
API SUPPORT → D3D, OpenGL, Glide

INTEREST GAUGE

INTERESTED EXCITED AROUSED

THE HYPE

Take control in a sci-fi classic and wreck havoc on those damn dirty apes!

THE HURDLE

Have you actually ever watched these movies? One word: Frightening

THE HIT

With equal parts action, adventure, and stealth gameplay, this could be a surprising sleeper hit.

Charlton Heston worked on the second movie, *Beneath*, for free

FIVE QUESTIONS

WE THREW OVER-RIPENED BANANAS AT COS LAZOURAS, *PLANET OF THE APES*' PRODUCER, UNTIL HE BOWED TO OUR INTELLECTUAL SUPERIORITY AND ANSWERED FIVE QUESTIONS.

Q: Will there be plenty of scantily-dressed primitive women for our hero to woo, and will there be any romantically inclined plot elements?
A: There are lots of savage humans throughout the game, and, yes, some are scantily clad women. The main female character, who also happens to be the love interest, is Nova, a scantily clad intelligent woman.

Q: There have been rumors flying about Arnold taking the Heston role in the re-make. Who would win in a fight: Heston, Arnold, or Ulysses?
A: Hmmmm tough one ... let me see. Ulysses is a few inches tall, Arnie is a six foot plus brick-house, and Heston is in his 70s. It would be close, but I guess I would have to say Ulysses.

Q: Will there be an overt use of bad primate puns throughout the game and after funky ape dispatching?
A: No, but there is some really funny dialog. One example is a scene where Ulysses needs to get past two gorilla guards. They have their backs to him and from their conversation it seems they are checking out a questionable publication as they keep commenting on [and I quote] "Look how sexy she is ... sooo hairy, mmm!!!"

Q: Tell us about Ape AI. How smart are these damn dirty apes?
A: There are five castes of apes: Gorillas (military), mandrills (militia), baboons (labor force), orangutans (politicians and religious leaders), and chimpanzees (scientists). Each caste has various levels, so, for instance, gorillas are broken into three levels plus their leader General Ursus. The ape AI will vary depending on each caste and level, so gorilla guards will be tough but relatively stupid. All apes will have sight/sound AI, but their reactions will vary.

Q: How much "ally" NPC interaction will there be? Will Ulysses have help in the gameplay, as opposed to characters just giving him stuff in cinematic sequences and such?
A: This game is very story driven, which means there are a lot of NPCs to interact with. Among the various actions Ulysses can perform there is also a TALK button. This allows Ulysses to try and enter into dialog with any character in the game. Ulysses has a number of human allies, which are part of the resistance. These allies will help with useful information, articles, maps and equipment as well as driving the plot.



Ok, we'll give this guy one thing: He looks bad-ass, until you realize he eats his own poop.

and investigate areas where noises are heard. Puzzles will range from simple key/switch conundrums, to stealth-based, navigational, action, and more cerebral cause-and-effect puzzles. An example of the last would be a situation where Ulysses must find a way to leak knock-out gas into a room of chimps, then once he's done that, find a way to clear the gas out before he can proceed.

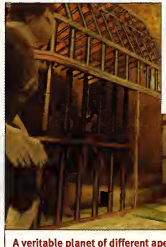
While it's still very early in development, Fox's attempt at bringing back a cheesy sci-fi franchise looks hopeful. Even if 3D action adventures are more common than a monkey in a monkey tree, if things go well, this one could turn out to be more fun than a barrel of monkeys. Whatever the hell that means.

— JASON D'APRILE *is often known as the great hairless ape. His animal magnetism is legendary in the gaming world*











A veritable planet of different apes.

PRIME TIME PRIMATES

Our fascination with apes is so present that you can't turn on the TV or see a movie without the hairy little bastids showing their giant gums. A look at the true stars of our genus ...



CLYDE
FAMOUS FOR → Being the hardest working Orangutan in show business (also the only). Starred alongside Clint Eastwood in the *Every Which Way But Loose* movies.
WHY WE LOVE HIM → He would punch-nucks whomever Clint said, "Left turn Clyde." He also covers face and eats his own poop
HUMAN VERSION → Carrot Top



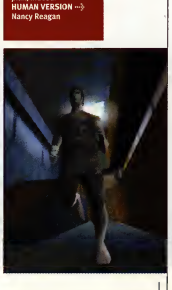
MARCEL
FAMOUS FOR → Doing what we've all wanted to do for years, humping all of the (female) "Friends" constantly — even if it was their legs
WHY WE LOVE HIM → He was the only personality David Schwimmer ever had
HUMAN VERSION → David Spade



RUPPEE
FAMOUS FOR → Short-lived, but memorable, tenure at PCXL, replacing (quite admirably) Dan Eggs, until he was struck by a deadly form of rickets
WHY WE LOVE HIM → His deadlines, arrived on time, ate own poop
HUMAN VERSION → Dan Eggs



BONZO
FAMOUS FOR → Going to bed with Ronald Reagan, eating his own poop (which is equally as disgusting)
WHY WE LOVE HIM → Made Ronald Reagan look smart by comparison — a master thespian, indeed!
HUMAN VERSION → Nancy Reagan



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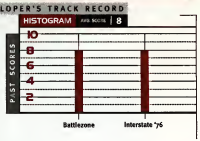
download the demo at: www.ff8-pc.com



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Go to **http://pcxl.ign.com/gaming411**: Product Number 139

DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Star Trek: Armada

Obvious strapline alert: Sweeping past Uranus to wipe out the Klingons

It has recently come to my attention that, as Star Trek fan-geeks go, I'm a poor, atypical specimen: I'm only a 32" waist, weighing in at a mere 165lbs. I spend too much time with girls. I can't even construct a proper sentence in Klingon, for heaven's sake [though he kinda looks like one – Ed], and a visitor to my abode would only spot about nine graven images of the Starship Enterprise, ten tops.

Still, it's been rough watching the parade of train-wreck Trek games, separated by infrequent islands of success (such as Interplay's *Starfleet Command*). In particular, the Trek universe has been long overdue for a good old-fashioned realtime strategy take, and Activision's forthcoming *Star Trek: Armada* looks as sexy and inviting as Seven of Nine stepping out of the sonic shower to ...

Anyway, in *Armada*, you take strategic command of entire Federation, Klingon, Romulan, and even Borg forces in the first classic-style RTS Star Trek game. Seems a starship from the not-terribly-distant future has come back, warning of an imminent wave of Borg about to come open up a Collective-sized can of Assimilation on our carbon-based asses. In a scheme superficially familiar to any *WarCraft* or *C&C* player, Armada challenges one to eight players to construct starbases, build/maintain fleets of up to 30 starship types, and explore at least nine types of deep-space "terrain." Dilithium moons serve as resource materials (in the vein of *C&C*'s Tiberium fields) and asteroid belts act as impassible "mountain ranges," except that they move across the strategic map. Wormholes automatically teleport starships across great distances and give warring factions yet another valuable logistical prize worth fighting over and black holes swallow and destroy any nearby ships that have lost their warp drive systems.

Further still, five distinct varieties of nebulae can affect starships in different ways (one of them will actually speed repair ... but the rest wreak havoc with shields, sensors, weapons, and/or actual on-board personnel). What promises to be so innovative is that the map itself is dynamic.



A Star Trek realtime strategy game: The final frontier ... Could my pointy little ears be hearing right?

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Activision
PUBLISHER → Activision
RELEASE DATE → Q1 2000
API SUPPORT → D3D

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

Hooray! Rejoice! Finally, finally, a Trek-based RTS. *Star Trek: Armada* looks like it will be *Starfleet Command* at an armchair-general's pace

THE HURDLE

RTS games often rely on terrain, and space is, well, kinda dull and empty. Also, each ship here should feel like it means something special. Both areas will be need to be addressed.

THE HIT

Trek fans haven't had this kind of sprawling, strategic shot at command since, like, before we had graphics. Also, you get to play the Borg.

FORGOTTEN TV SHOWS

Star Trek games are all good and well, but there are plenty of other TV shows that just aren't getting their pixelated props. Here are a few we'd like to see on a PC near us soon



THE A-TEAM
Each level you get locked in a shed full of metal and tools from which you must make a marauding vehicle of destruction. You then bust out of the shed and shoot up everything, while killing no one. If someone dies, it's game over sucka



BAYWATCH
Who cares, just get some nice renders of "Baywatch" babes in swimsuits, let the fun begin



GILLIGAN'S ISLAND
Every level you get an opportunity to escape the island, but the AI-controlled Gilligan will do whatever he can to screw it up. Use the professor's wits, Ginger's charms, and Mary Ann's cuteness to escape, but it won't be easy



LAND OF THE LOST
Dodging dinosaurs and avoiding Sleestacks while trying to figure out why the hell your dad's hair is so frizzy. Think *Trespasser* only fun

Patrick Stewart, Michael Dorn (Worf), and Denise Crosby (Commander Sela) supply voice-overs www.startrek.com

FIVE QUESTIONS

***STAR TREK ARMADA*'S PRODUCER MARC TURNDORF UNWITTINGLY ENTERED THE FIVE QUESTIONS ZONE.**

Q: *Armada* boasts a close-up 3D battle view as well as the typical overview. Is the 3D stuff just eye-candy?
A: The game can be played in either mode. However, during combat, the cinematic combat view offers an unparalleled level of immersion.

Q: Preview builds were suggested to run on PII 300s! What's the lowest-end system that will work?
A: When the game releases, a P166, 32MB RAM, and a D3D supported video card will work fine.

Q: How will *Armada* give players a sense of each ship's worth?
A: The player will control fewer ships, but these ships will live longer and be multi-dimensional. Each has shields, engines, life support, sensors, and weapons. When a system is destroyed it is unavailable until it is repaired. Repair rate is based on available crew and your race's adeptness at ship repair.

Q: You're facing down a hostile alien commander, and if you fight he's gonna kick your ass. Give us your best Kirk/Picard bluff.
A: Kirk's Corbomite maneuver. I'd explain to the hostile commander that my ship's hull contains a non-existent substance called Corbomite, a material so combustible that it would destroy all matter within a huge radius.

Q: Seven of Nine, Janice Rand, or Counselor Troi? Discuss.
A: I have always been partial to Dr. Beverly Crusher. I think it is the red hair. However within the parameters of this question, I'd have to say Seven of Nine.



Sleeping with every alien girl is not an option ... too bad.

Naturally, the different races will each have their own specific strengths and weaknesses. No surprise, the Klingon craft (and crews) will be strong, if not exhibiting excessive tactical finesse, and the Romulans utilize their exotic cloaking devices and personal penchants for being total bastards. The Federation ships boast the best all-around balance of tech, durability, and firepower. And everybody will have a healthy fear of the utterly alien Borg, whose freakish cubical (and now spherical) vessels "assimilate" hostile forces and can take on 15 or 16 opposing starcraft at one time.

It would be easy to slap a *C&C* scheme over the Trek mythos (Klingon Birds of Prey in place of Mammoth Tanks), ignoring the fact that starships house personnel. Instead, individual ships have personalities and real value. A shortage of competent crew members will eventually kill you as surely as a dearth of dilithium.

Diehard Trekkies will delight in the details, such as the bizarre Federation technology/phenomenon which (temporarily) splits a starship into two undeniably real versions of itself, capable of delivering a short-term double dose of asswhomping. All the while, battles on the goof's-eye 2D playfield are presented in gorgeous, detailed 3D dogfights. In fact, a small tactical window will always display the fully-rendered combat occurring in the current hot-zone, and a single click there will bring the commander right to the midst of the battle.

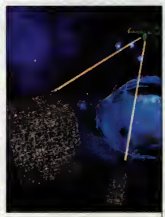
Any Trek-gamer worth his/her rank insignia pins is likely drooling by now. Let's leave it here: There's been a gaping RTS-shaped hole in the Trek game universe, and *STA* looks like just the grand-scheme peg to fill it. As an added bonus for the average Trekker, the strategically-paced, click-and-send scheme allows for ambidextrous gameplay — Right hand: Mouse. Left hand: Ding-Dong.

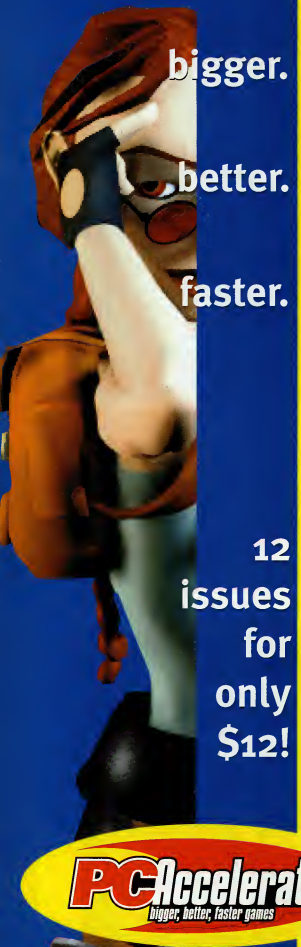
— CHRIS HUDAK *can do the Vulcan nerve-pinch, and it tickles something fierce*



In space, no one can hear you scream, "Tank Rush!"







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Voodoo latest

We know our shit ...

Back in the October **PCXL**, a prophetic Mike Morrissey contemplated life inside his Y2K bunker with "my woefully inadequate Voodoo3, blissfully ignorant of the Voodoo6000 and TNT4, which I'm sure will be out by Jan 1, 2000."

Well, 3Dfx has unveiled their plans for, yep, the Voodoo 5 6000. Okay, realistically it won't hit retail until next fall. But wait until you get a load of this ... the card will be an AGP 128MB monster, featuring a quad Voodoo 5 chip SLI configuration, capable of processing 1.37 to 1.47 Gigapixels per second (depending on whether you have the 166MHz or 183MHz versions). It'll be so shit-hot fast that it'll need its own refrigeration unit AND — get this — its own AC power supply! The price? How about a high-end $599? The core chip is based on 3Dfx's new VSA-100 (Voodoo Scaleable Architecture) technology, finally entering the current land of 32-bit.



This is a vision of the future, four Voodoo5 VSA chips all on a single board, requiring its own power supply. There are also reports of even higher end cards from Quantum, makers of the Obsidian.

3Dfx also announced the Voodoo4, due for Q1 2000. The card won't feature the T-buffer technology, but will have 32MB and a single VSA chip, aimed at casual users at $179. At the bottom of the Voodoo5 ladder is the V5000 — a PCI card that will support T-buffer and hardware anti-aliasing, and the 32MB card will retail at $229.

Above that (but below the 6000) is the Voodoo5 5000 AGP. This 64MB card will have a dual chip SLI configuration, T-buffer support and retail at $299. However, none of the new cards will support the T&L (transform and lighting) technology due to the limited number of games so far that will take advantage of the technology.





So welcome to the caption that accompanies this wonderfully artistic picture of the Voodoo5 5000. High marks for style, composition, and a big bonus for the hairy eye thingy.

WHADDA I DO?

So Nvidia's GeForce 256 cards are here now. The DDR variant (double data rate) that sports the speedier memory will hit the market possibly in time for peak holiday shopping, and the Voodoo4 and Voodoo5 boards are now on the horizon. It's a consumer-confusing minefield. That's why you want to listen to our expert advice ...

I HAVE —› My video card's too embarrassing to mention
I WANT TO PLAY —› Anything
I SHOULD BUY —› A GeForce — good price, great performance, and available right now

I HAVE —› Voodoo2/TNT1
I WANT TO PLAY —› *Quake III*, *Nocturne*, *Slave Zero*
I SHOULD BUY —› Wait for the DDR GeForce

I HAVE —› Voodoo3/TNT2
I WANT TO PLAY —› Everything
I SHOULD BUY —› Nothing right now. Chill out, you're getting good framerates, so the investment won't really be worth it until Voodoo5 or the next iteration of Nvidia's GeForce technology

Thrustmaster NASCAR Charger Wheel

PRICE —› $49.99
WEBSITE —› www.thrustmaster.com
BUNDLE —› Comes with controller configuration software

The Nascar Charger comes complete with the standard four-button setup on the wheel. The accelerator and brake pedal housing is compact, and the pedals are close together, but it's weighty enough not to shift around. But the most outstanding feature is the clamping system. Once the clamp and wheel are screwed together, it's just a matter of pulling the clamp to tighten.

But how does it play? In typical carspeak, it's responsive. The games we tested displayed no noticeable lag. For you non-leadfooted drivers, the pedals are quite sensitive, too.

Some problems were encountered initially with the configuration of the wheel, with the included Charger control software crashing upon launch. This was due to a DirectX 7 conflict and is fixed.

Minor software problems aside, ThrustMaster shows, with the Charger wheel, that though the parent company may change (bought by Guillemont), the quality of their products don't.

RATING 7

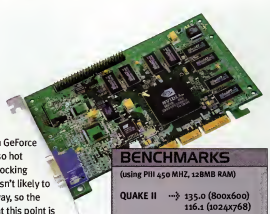
Pluses
—› Easy setup and cheap
—› Sturdy

Minuses
—› No force-feedback
—› DirectX 7 conflicts

Holy hoppin' horse fat! The GeForce has finally arrived, and guess what? It kicks generous helpings of ass! We've received two cards using the new super chip from NVIDIA, and we've got 'em both reviewed for you right here in a head to head of the hottest graphics powerhouses available today. For in-depth information on the technology itself, check out our GeForce story in the November '99 issue.

GeForce lands

Creative Labs
3D Blaster Annihilator



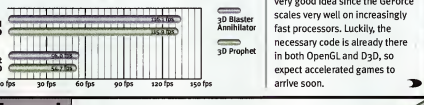
PRICE --> $249 (MSRP)
WEBSITE --> www.creativelabs.com
BUNDLE --> DVD software and various game demos



Creative Labs is responsible for making NVIDIA's own GeForce reference boards, so it's not surprising that of the first two GeForces we've received, the Creative board is the faster of the two – even running with slightly older drivers. It's not a huge difference, as you'll see in the benchmarks, so don't stress yourself out if you find the Guillemot board for a good price.

What the Annihilator doesn't have over the Guillemot board is a TV-out feature, so even though its retail price is less, if you want to output games and movies to your television, look to the Guillemot board as your guiding light. Yet another feature that the Creative board lacks is a utility to overclock the GeForce's core speed. By default, both the Annihilator and 3D Prophet come clocked at 120MHz core speed and 166MHz memory, but only the Prophet lets you make adjustments to both clock and memory speeds. As it turns out, the first generation GeForce chips run so hot that overclocking your card isn't likely to work anyway, so the omission at this point is entirely forgivable.

As you probably know by now, one of the things that makes the GeForce so special is the fact that it has an integrated geometry engine that allows it to handle all four steps of the 3D pipeline. It's important to note, however, that this feature is only used in games that are written to take special advantage of it. So, for the time being, having a fast CPU is still a very good idea since the GeForce scales very well on increasingly fast processors. Luckily, the necessary code is already there in both OpenGL and D3D, so expect accelerated games to arrive soon.



BENCHMARKS
(using PIII 450 MHZ, 128MB RAM)

QUAKE II --> 135.0 (800x600) 116.1 (1024X768)

QUAKE III TEST (32-bit, all effects max) --> 56.0 (800x600) 36.0 (1024X768)

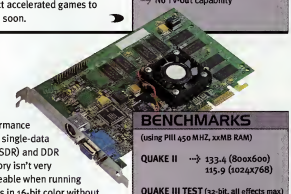
3D MARK --> 4375

RATING 8

Pluses
- Potential of T&L (geometry processor)
- Fast even without T&L
- Beautiful 32-bit 3D rendering

Minuses
- DDR is right around the corner
- No TV-out capability

Guillemot
3D Prophet



PRICE --> $289 (MSRP)
WEBSITE --> www.guillemot.com
BUNDLE --> DVD software and various game demos



As we mentioned, the 3D Prophet is the slower of the two cards, though the difference is negligible. This Guillemot card more than makes up for it with extra features such as the ability to overclock both the core and memory speed of the GeForce chip, and a handy TV-out feature that actually looks quite good on a 27" set. Other than that, the cards are nearly identical, and we recommend that if you are in the market for a GeForce card, that you buy whichever one you can find at the lowest price.

If there were any one real reason not to upgrade to either GeForce card right now, it would be because of a slight variation in GeForce technology that should be on shelves within a couple of months from now. This is actually a memory technology, and it's called DDR, short for double-data rate. This type of memory can send and receive two instructions from the GeForce every clock cycle – hence the name "double-data."

Although initial cards will only be shipping with 150MHz RAM, the DDR option will run close to 300MHz. The difference in performance using single-data rate (SDR) and DDR memory isn't very noticeable when running games in 16-bit color without geometry processing, but when you jump up into 32-bit, and throw on a big helping of T&L (Transform & Lighting), DDR really bumps up the frame rates.

Just be aware that such boards (from Creative and Guillemot alike) will likely cost upwards of $100 more than these already expensive SDR cards. So if you're a gamer on a tight budget, be cautious. Whether or not the difference will ultimately be worth the cash is still up for debate, but look for reviews here in **PCXL** as soon as we get final DDR boards.

BENCHMARKS
(using PIII 450 MHZ, 128MB RAM)

QUAKE II --> 133.4 (800x600) 115.9 (1024X768)

QUAKE III TEST (32-bit, all effects max) --> 54.7 (800x600) 35.0 (1024X768)

3D MARK --> 4310

RATING 8

Pluses
- Same as Annihilator (see above)
- TV-out
- Robust overclocking utility

Minuses
- More expensive than the already costly Annihilator board
- DDR is right around the corner

Born a Prince... Raised a Peasant...

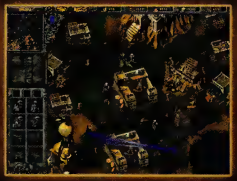
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Act Labs
GS Gun System

PRICE → $99.99
WEBSITE → www.act-labs.com
BUNDLE → *Top Shot* (full version)

Without a doubt, this is one of the worst products to ever show up in our office. We weep knowing that the plastic used to create this hunk of dung could've been put to better use, like making a prosthetic limb for the limbless or a good, stackable patio chair for the chairless.

The GS consists of a large desktop holster, two guns, and a one-handed joystick controller (meant to replace your mouse when standing away from the keyboard). Each gun is a lightweight, silver and black plastic number that has a trigger and dual side buttons (compatible with both lefties and righties). The product's crapocity showed up immediately during installation. It turns out that your monitor cable must be plugged into the GS in order for it to work. Not a problem — except for one thing — the power must be on to the GS at all times or your screen will go black, which, considering how loose the power connector is, was often. Additionally, while the guns worked during configuration, the accuracy of most shots was off by at least one or two inches even when a gun was placed close to the screen.

Actually, configuring the GS was more fun than using it. *Top Shot*, a sharpshooting sim, became *Low Blow* when configured for use with the GS. The trigger had to be squeezed multiple times for even one shot to show up on screen, and the aim was so bad as to be nonexistent. New drivers and a patch came out for the GS and *Top Shot* during the course of writing this review, but they made absolutely no difference. Quite simply, the GS stinks. Other games are supposed to support it, including *Die Hord Trilogy 2*, *Soldier of Fortune*, and an unofficial



Quake 2 mod, but it's hard to imagine how anything other than a hunting or *House Of The Dead*-style game would benefit, even if it worked. Conserve plastic — the GS doesn't deserve a shot.

RATING 1

Pluses
→ Can't hurt anyone except yourself
→ Cheaper than a real gun

Minuses
→ Doesn't work
→ Unstable monitor pass-through

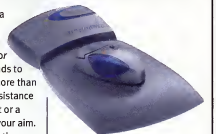
Logitech
Wingman Force Feedback Mouse

PRICE → $99.99
WEBSITE → www.logitech.com
BUNDLE → *Grunz*, *Railroad Tycoon II*, and *Heavy Gear II*

Oh, why not? Every other peripheral on the market has incorporated force-feedback technology, so why not mice? Though the LWFFM is marketed towards gamers, it has other uses as well. The FEELit Desktop software lets you "feel" your desktop (and some website) icons as your cursor passes over them, much like a car passing over a speedbump — a nice gimmick, but unnecessary to the average PC user. Additionally, the mouse is physically tethered to its plastic pad, therefore limiting its range of motion.

That said, the Wingman does exactly what it's supposed to do. It simulates everything from subtle vibrations to violent explosions, weight and mass, and even distinct borders on a map. Technically, it's a marvel and a great toy if you have a spare 100 bucks.

But, while the idea of having mouse force feedback in a game like *Heavy Gear II* sounds cool, it tends to impede gameplay more than it helps when the resistance from a Gear's weight or a gun's recoil affects your aim. This is definitely not the product of choice for multiplayer games. Single player adventures (it could almost make *Myst* interesting), puzzles, and sim games benefit the most, but there just aren't enough games on the market supporting it to tell if it'll have any long-term impact. A pack-in demo gives the biggest indication of this peripheral's potential, though — a mouse-controlled elastic wire that can pick up and bounce a small ball. With force feedback, it's amazingly interactive. You can feel the ball's weight, instinctively know when it'll



come plummeting back down to earth, or how much force will be needed to send it higher than before. Once a game can translate that experience, the Wingman Force Feedback Mouse will have found its killer app.

RATING 8

Pluses
→ Can be used for more than games
→ Convincing force feedback

Minuses
→ Limited use and support
→ May interfere with gameplay

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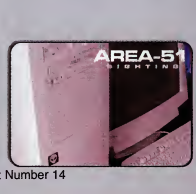
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Floppy Drive 1.44MB
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REVIEWS

One thousand years of ass-kicking

They all laughed at us, you know. We warned 'em. They said we'd go down like an Owen Hart opener. But you all knew better. You saw the quality on all the pages that didn't end up stuck together — and especially those that did. We've beaten the hell out of the 20th century and it's time to turn our big thick guns towards the future. This month we point 'em at a bunch of gas-guzzling asphalt eaters. *GTA2*, *Harley Davidson*, *Driver*, and *Demolition Racer* all get the green light but only one makes it to the finish line. The U.S. Rangers and Delta Force, jealous of our enormous cannons, came back for a little more PCXL love and we let 'em know who's boss. Fortunately for you, we jotted down a few notes while "working" and poured a ton of filler into what we now call "reviews."



Who's laughing now, sucka?

WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN

Ideal. Everyone comes to their senses and realizes you are their supreme lord and master. Welcome to Year One	10
Angelina Jolie serving you beer, giving up the good stuff, handing you a smoke, and turning into a pizza	9
Pretty damn good. The crash happens and all your debt is removed. Thanks Y2K!	8
Still a winner, but with some drawbacks. Ms. I'm-So-Fine invites you to her crib, but it's a $50 cab fare away	7
While watching the ball at Times Square, you get kissed by some drunk chick. Unfortunately she's your sister	6
You watched the festivities on TV. Eh. It's just another year	5
Disappointing. Like staring at your crashed PC after thinking those "Y2K patches" worked	4
Ow. Quit it. Ow. Quit it. Your paycheck won't be available for months, *Quake III* won't be out til 2001	3
Just like the junk you'll be rummaging through to find nibblets of food after the fall of civilization this month	2
Some fruitball in the Balkans deciding to pop some pills and press the shiny red button	1

KILLER GAME

Any game that receives a 9 or 10 from our rigorous scoring system warrants this nifty logo. If you see the **PC ACCELERATOR** Killer Game stamp, you know it's a game worth buying. Only the true classics deserve this elite status, so don't expect to see this symbol often.

SUICIDE

If we're going to create a stamp for the truly great, then it's only fair to label the unforgivable shit as well. It takes an abominable score of 1 or 2 to qualify for the noose around the neck. Heed our warning: Stay away from these games at all costs.

D-CUP

As we have painfully learned over countless "single night" bar-hopping extravaganzas, there are both winners and losers in this unfair world of ours. We take solace in our remarkable ability to lay down from on high which games fit into each category. These games were winners.

PHAROAH
Publisher → Sierra
Developer → Impressions
Rating → 9
How good is it? Any game where you are god and have thousands of slaves that live and die to build massive tributes to your divinity is a game for us

DRIVER
Publisher → GT Interactive
Developer → Reflections Interactive
Rating → 8
How good is it? "Bullitt," "Starsky and Hutch," and "Dukes of Hazzard" got us all hot and bothered. *Driver* finishes the job

PANZER GENERAL 3D ASSAULT
Publisher → SSI
Developer → SSI
Rating → 8
How good is it? The *Panzer General* series has been producing solid winners since forever — making it 3D only satisfies our need to have everything be 3D

TRAINING BRA

Ah, the elusive balance of intricate gameplay, sensual environments, and the ability to wow and amaze. Games that keep you gasping 'til the credits roll, sometimes leaving you with a greater understanding of your world, your relationships, and yourself ... Whatever, here's the losers.

HARLEY DAVIDSON
Publisher → GoH Games
Developer → WizardWorks
Rating → 4
How bad is it? Ever seen a bored Hell's Angel? There has to be more to riding the roads of America than drive, get gas, drive, get gas. Yawn

GTA2
Publisher → DMA Design
Developer → Rockstar Games
Rating → 3
How bad is it? As bad as a game could be that's a blatant rehash of a mediocre game from last year

FRISBEE GOLF
Publisher → Activision
Developer → MindGames
Rating → Does anyone care?
How bad is it? Activision should be ashamed for pandering to the poor gimps who can't drag their pasty asses outside with a damn frisbee

ACCELE-RATED >>

This additional rating provides specific information on how a game performs on a variety of competing 3D chipsets. We test games on up to four major 3D cards and report back with the true test for any 3D accelerator: how it affects the game. We base these ratings on graphic enhancements, framerates, and performance to give you a good idea of how a game will perform on your 3D card.

(Note: Performance may vary depending on the card and the setup of your system)

ACCELE-RATED

In this little box you'll find out all you need to know about the 3D-ness of the game. We'll talk about different cards, problems, and specifics to help you decide if the game is right for your system. Also, you can use this information to decide what kind of system you need in order to play the games you're lusting after. Occasionally we'll also throw in dirty words and helpful life advice. So read carefully, ok?

RATINGS >>

Our rating scale is a simple 1 to 10 — no decimal points, no obscure percentages, just a straight score that gets right to the point. Before we score games, they undergo countless hours of testing on different systems, with different 3D cards — our reviewers even play the games under the influence of various narcotics. In the end we stamp a single score on the game, which is essentially a numeric value of the game's worth. We love games and always try to look on the bright side, but when a pile of steaming crap comes in, we won't hold back and allow our readers to waste their money on said crap. You can count on our reviews for honesty, insight, and maybe even a few laughs.

GRAPHICS

Rendering quality, framerates, and special effects all contribute to an immersive gaming experience.

SOUND

Visceral sound effects and appropriate music can help make a good game great.

DEPTH

How often and how long you find yourself playing a game are good indicators of its quality.

DESIGN

The backbone of a game is the overall vision behind it, from characters and weapons to levels and missions.

RATING

Killergame!

DEVELOPER -->	Legend Entertainment
PUBLISHER -->	GT Interactive
REQUIRED -->	P200, 32MB RAM, 500MB hard drive
IDEAL -->	PII 450, 128MB RAM, Voodoo3 or TNT2 Ultra, 1.2GB hard drive

Wheel of Time

The Wheel of Carnage is more like it ...

ACCELE-RATED

The *Unreal* engine still favors 3Dfx when it comes to speed and stability. Under D3D on a TNT2 Ultra, the game is not quite as refined. It wasn't terribly stable under D3D either.



While movies usually make the jump to the gaming world with painfully tragic results (especially for us reviewers), books seldom leap our way. Consequently, *Wheel of Time* has been an eagerly awaited foray into the dark, descriptive, and, by now, overly long literary world of Robert Jordan's fantasy series. But this is definitely a first-person shooter, so fans of the books shouldn't rush off thinking they'll find a homey RPG or adventure game.

If you haven't read the books, don't worry about it. The excellent cinematic sequences manage to tell the story *and* give you the complete lowdown on the setting — no small feat, given the complexities of Jordan's world. Basically, you take the role of Elayna, a member of the White Tower, which is a group of women called Aes Sedai who can channel the One Power, thus giving them great magical ability (and exceptionally lovely skin). Elayna, as the game frequently reminds us, can't channel "more than a trickle," so she must rely on ancient magical artifacts called Ter'Angreal. And thus we have the *WoT* equivalent of guns and ammo.

The Ter'Angreal you pick up have limited charges, but there's a lot of them — and incredible diversity among them — and that's one of the key reasons why this game is so damn cool and innovative. Sure, you're really just going around, blowing up hordes of bad things, but it's never been done in quite this way. Aside from direct-shot weapons such as fireballs, darts, air gusts, and Balefire, *Wheel of Time* sports homing spells that follow opponents anywhere, and Decay, which kills them slowly. There's also Chain Lightning, which grips them in an electric death leash, and even lets you add other victims to the chain.

There are a lot of defensive choices as well — fire, air, and general-purpose shields, even ones that reflect attacks back to their caster. On top of that, there are Swap Ter'Angreal that let you switch places with the target, a spell that seeks out unseen opponents for you to lock onto, and even attacks that turn the enemy's magic against them, along with healing, levitating, freezing, and more. While the game has no RPG aspects whatsoever, the level of tactical options with this array of diverse weaponry creates incredibly unique situations. This is especially true in multiplayer where spell combos and attacks are well balanced, and when handled proficiently offer up some of the most original dueling gameplay yet seen.

The developers went out of their way to include all the major sites from Jordan's books, while being careful to set the storyline in an unspecified but lengthy time before the novels. And they've created one of the most beautiful and compelling gaming landscapes in quite some time.





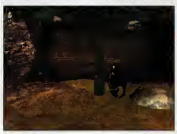


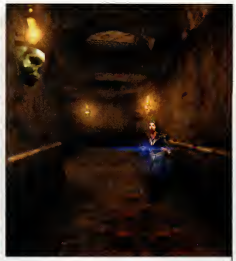


Beautiful architecture and purty nature-ish scenes are fouled by smelly beasts.









"Hey Grog, stop me if you've heard this one ... why'd the Aes Sedai try to cross the hall?"

Lovely spell effects trail after a worthless vile wretch, the Myrddraal evades death, and the foul Black Ajah wenches exert extreme cruelty.

Using the *Unreal* engine, *Wheel of Time* is nothing short of stunning. You'll annihilate monsters through the cursed city of Shadar Logoth, the White Tower, the Fortress of an army of very unpleasant White Cloaked warriors, the dark and fearsome paths of the Ways, and the barren Blight lands. Texturing work is some of the best ever, and these environments literally come alive with graphic detail.

Missions, while staying squarely in the action realm, range from the usual plowing through hordes of villains to reach specific goals, to several defensive and timed excursions, and the game can be bitterly hard at times. As well executed as the single-player game is, however, the distinctive magic system makes this one of the most unique multiplayer experiences around. It's in this capacity that the variety of defensive and offensive tactics becomes apparent. You can't play the Arena mode (read: Deathmatch) like a typical shooter, since defense plays such an important role.

It's fun as hell to try to thwart other players through underhanded means like a Freeze spell, and then hit them with the ultra-powerful Balefire while they are immobile. You can still cast while frozen, so if the frozen party has Reflect on, then whoever cast the Balefire is likely toast.

Citadel mode is even more interesting. This is a team game wherein you first lay down fortifications such as spear and pit traps, monsters, fire, brick walls, and other defensive units in your Citadel in an effort to protect your seals of power. After you've set up the defenses using a simple point-and-click interface, part (or all) of the team must try to get the opponents' four Seals by getting past their defenses, then bring it back to your own fortress again. It's an extremely entertaining mix of strategy and action. *Wheel of Time* uses *Unreal Tournament*'s code for the most part, and Internet play is generally highly playable, stable, and fast-paced.

Wheel of Time's presentation is remarkable. The graphics are nothing short of beautiful, the music has a suitably renaissance feel to it (even if it's far too calming at times), and sound effects are fantastic. The 15 or so single-player missions are involving, exciting, and challenging, and there's real innovation in the gameplay. Indeed, the biggest complaint here is that the game isn't nearly as expansive as the initial design had suggested it might be. Jordan's world has made for a great first-person shooter, but you can't help but think that with the setting and the elements laid down, it could make for something even more. However you look at it, *Wheel of Time* is simply one of the best first-person action games since *Thief* and *Half-Life*.

— JASON D'APRILE ***wants to avoid getting a pick axe in the head***





Guess he shouldn't put his hand on her ass ...

GRAPHICS

Wo7 has some of the most beautiful levels out there, and the spell effects are awesome.

SOUND

The sound effects are fantastic, music is cool, and most of the voice acting is decent.

DEPTH

While it's essentially pure action, the weapons system gives an incredible amount of tactical choices, especially in multiplayer.

DESIGN

Great single-player levels, awesome spells, and the most athletic Aes Sedai ever seen.

RATING 9

Pluses

- Fantastic graphics and sound
- Great level design, excellent story
- Innovative, well-done magic/weapon system

Minuses

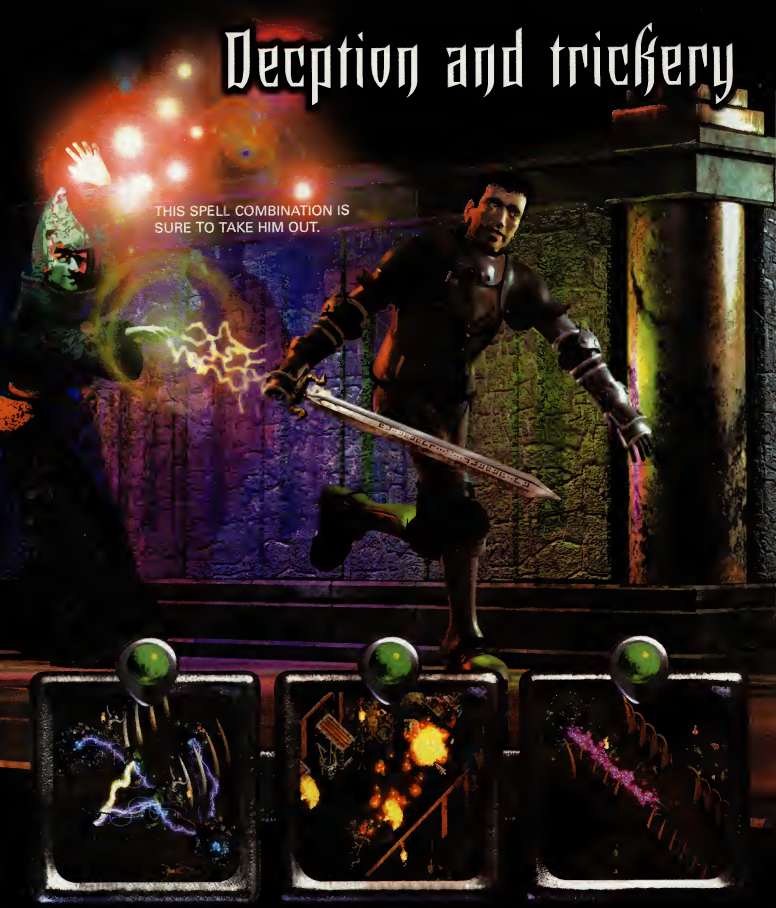
- May disappoint real hardcore fans of the books
- High difficulty level
- Braindead AI at times

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DEVELOPER --> DMA Design	
PUBLISHER --> Rockstar Games	
REQUIRED --> P200, 32MB RAM, 65MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM, 3D accelerator card	
IDEAL --> PII 333, 128MB RAM, no imagination	

Grand Theft Auto 2

Who left this PlayStation game lying around?

ACCELE-RATED

GTA2 requires a D3D card, not that you'd notice any difference. All the moving bits in the game are rendered sprites, so the card just speeds things up a bit.



In *GTA 2*, cops sometimes set up road blocks — makes for easy targets.



The pitfalls of a life lived in the fast lane.



This move is officially titled, "Malachi Crunch."

Some time ago a game called *Grand Theft Auto* was released. A top-down arcadey-style driving action game, it felt decidedly old school. And it worked. It was fun and as a side bonus it was one of the most violently anti-social games ever. You played a criminal doing various jobs for gangs and crime syndicates, mowing down random pedestrians and cops.

There were some shortcomings in the design, though. For example, the extremely limited view meant you couldn't really plan where you were going unless you had the time and patience to memorize the entire city map (no larger map view, sorry). So for the sequel you might hope that they would try to address these flaws. But no, it turns out that I've simultaneously described both *GTA* and its "sequel," *GTA 2*.

GTA 2's yet another expansion pack-type sequel. The real changes to the game come in the way of more content — levels, weapons, graphics, and stuff like that, rather than in the core game. Again, you start out staring at a little tiny segment of a big city, with a collection of colored pixels representing your guy. Move him around with the arrow keys (it's entirely keyboard driven), until you spot a car you want to jack.



As we all know, a Failed Frenzy is a dangerous thing.

You then follow the arrows to one of the ringing pay phones where you will be informed about a job.

These jobs start with getting from point A to point B without getting killed. When you get to point B you have to perform an action like kill someone (with a variety of weapons including machineguns, rocket launchers, and lasers), plant a bomb, or pick someone up for a getaway. When you perform enough jobs for a certain gang, you gain respect, which leads to more missions, but causes the other two gangs on each stage to shoot on sight when you enter their turf.

Hope you have a lot of patience though, because in order to beat a stage you need a massive amount of respect, and you can only save at a predesignated save point which is impossible to find (again, no city map). Get really wound up and you get to cut loose on a "kill frenzy," using a flamethrower or fire truck, attempting to kill a certain amount of people in a given time limit. You can also just go ballistic at any time, but then you have to deal with the cops.

Bottom line — it's the same game. Oh, but this time there's colored lighting on the police cars! Oh, and wait ... you have a health meter! Woo hoo! And ... there are different radio stations to listen to!

If this is all it takes to count as a sequel, the game industry is in some sorry-ass shape. Expansion packs disguised as sequels suck, and should be villified, but if you're in for mindless thuggery, this is small time fun.

— **ED LEE** *is in sorry-ass shape these days, too*

GRAPHICS
Circa 1993 spritefest.

SOUND
From a quality standpoint, the sound design is this game's high point.

DEPTH
A steep learning curve means you'll either get frustrated with it in one day or play it for weeks.

DESIGN
A $40 expansion pack.

RATING 5

Pluses
- Mindless mayhem
- New, colored lighting
- More radio stations

Minuses
- Virtually no new substance
- Virtually no new ideas
- Virtually the same game as the original

DEVELOPER -->	Zombie Studios
PUBLISHER -->	Ripcord Games
REQUIRED -->	P200, 32MB RAM, 200MB hard drive, 8X CD-ROM, Direct 3D card Sound Blaster compatible card
IDEAL -->	PII 450, 128MB RAM, Voodoo3 3500

Spec Ops II: Green Berets

Yeah these guys stink after a mission, but they can still kick your ass

ACCELE-RATED

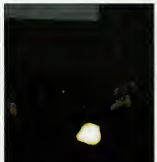
The game's new 3D engine showcases tons of polygons. Voodoo3 moves at a smooth framerate, even at 1024X768. The game supports Direct3D as well as Glide.



In the original Spec Ops, this is where you crashed.



So binoculars weren't invented for cheap thrills?



Tense moments like this really call for a group hug. Aww, isn't that sweet?

When the first *Spec Ops* was released two years ago it introduced a new genre of PC shooters. For once it wasn't all about shoot now/ask questions later; it was about being stealthy, conservative with your ammo, and intelligent. It wasn't all about you; it was about your team. It made you think. From that moment on, the tactical combat genre was born.

Later, games like *Rainbow Six* and *Delta Force* made us forget (at least temporarily) that there was more to first-person action than *Quake II* and *Unreal*. However, being the first game out the gate has its disadvantages. *Spec Ops*' engine was extremely dated. It only supported Glide, there was no multiplayer, and the AI was horrendous. The developers used sprites instead of polygons and frankly, the lighting sucked.

Spec Ops II: Green Berets features an all new 3D engine, improved multiplayer and AI, and puts you in control of a group of four elite soldiers (up from two in the original). Before a mission, you pick your troops and plan for the mission. Although planning is not as crucial as it was in *Rainbow Six*, picking the right killing machines for each particular mission is critical.

The game is spread over four campaigns dotted around the world — Antarctica, North Korea, Thailand, and Pakistan. Each is broken up into smaller progressive missions, which ultimately leads to the main mission. For example, in North Korea the main objective is to escort a defecting Defense Minister. In order to do that, you must secure the beachhead, locate the defector, eliminate any resistance, and safely escort him out. Just when you think things start to settle down, BOO YA! Enemies are biting your ass and the bullets are flying.

Controlling your units has been streamlined to a simple mouse click. Clicking the right-mouse button reveals an overlay with orders on screen, much like in *Unreal Tournament*. With the much-improved AI, units respond quicker to enemy fire and will cover you when the shit goes down. Thankfully, they don't shoot you in the back anymore. Multiplayer capability has been overhauled and is definitely the game's strong point. Various modes include deathmatch, team vs. team deathmatch, cooperative mission, team vs. team mission, and king of the hill. Publisher Ripcord Games, in association with Mplayer.com, is bringing *Specs Ops II* to the internet with a dedicated fan site, www.specops2.com.

While this is all well and good, *Spec Ops II* still falls short in many areas. The game can be buggy as hell, the control setup is moronic, and the movement (while realistic) really slows down the game. *Quake* players beware: This game plays at a snail's pace compared to *QIII* and could result in a quick uninstall. However, if you are willing to stick through it, there are some great things about *Spec Ops II*.

The coolest thing about this game is that any half-ass gamer can pick up the game and get into it. Some people can't handle the intricate planning and execution of the campaigns of *Rainbow Six* or *Rogue Spear*. For those folks (and there are a lot of you out there) *Spec Ops II: Green Berets* has your name written all over it.



Sometimes the urge to TK is just too great to resist.

— TOM HAM might have written far Maxim and USA Today, but we still had to write these captions

GRAPHICS

Great environments, little clipping and ultra-smooth animations. Nice touches like blood trails in snow.

SOUND

Authentic weapon and killing sounds recorded in the field (although no real people were shot or harmed in the making of this game).

DEPTH

Although not as deep as other games in the genre, good for a "quick fix."

DESIGN

Improves on the original (then again, so would anything that ran).

RATING

6

Pluses

- Great multiplayer
- Most 3D cards supported
- Easy to get into

Minuses

- Not enough depth
- Missions should be longer
- Controlling more units would have been nice

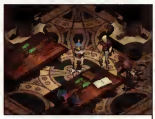
DEVELOPER → Valkyrie Studios
PUBLISHER → Monolith
REQUIRED → P200, 32MB RAM, 100MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM, 4MB graphics card
IDEAL → PII 266, 64MB RAM, 600MB hard drive, 8X CD-ROM

Septerra Core: Legacy of the Creator

The Core of Mediocrity?

ACCELE-RATED

N/A. It's all pre-rendered, anime-styled stuff here, with no 3D-card usage in sight. How'dya like them apples? As always, we're no happier about it than you.



My local library greatly appreciates it when I walk into the place armed.



My, your melons look lovely this year.

There's a general rule of thumb around these parts that says if a game's been in development for too long, it usually comes out badly. Far be it from us to put a name to this theory, but it's seldom proven wrong. Monolith's console RPG-clone-a-like *Septerra Core* would have been an incredible console game ... three or four years ago.

For PC fans, *Septerra Core*'s main strength is that within this distinct (and to many, annoying) form of gaming, there's almost no competition. *Final Fantasy VII* is old and bug-ridden, and *Final Fantasy VIII* won't be out until January. Ironically, its biggest competitor will be Monolith's own *Odium*, which at press time had just gone gold. What goes on in *Septerra Core* (and in most games of this sort) is a blue-haired, athletically fit, sassy chick with a gun leaves her small town and goes forth into the world to seek adventure with her geek friend and his pet robot.

Eventually, she finds out that she must save the world as she knows it from great cataclysmic evil. Big surprise. To *Septerra Core*'s credit, its odd world actually has a deep element of history and religion. The plot revolves around a fantasy version of the Bible, and while the pace is predictable and completely by the numbers, the progression has a reasonably compelling edge.



"The Brat Finder 2000 led us straight to you!"



RoboDog lays down the smack on some undead trash.

The main problem, however, is the execution, which is more than a tad lacking. Graphics for both characters and locales are 3D rendered and look good, but the character animation is terrible. Most locations are annoyingly simplistic, yet the world map is inexplicably convoluted, forcing you to wander pointlessly to find what should be simple locales. Voice acting is decent, but the dialogue itself is canned and cheesy. The soundtrack is better, with some appropriately dramatic tunes.

What's more, the interface uses a confusing, overly complicated menu system. This is a major problem during the timer-based combat, which turns out to be a hopelessly boring click fest. The game uses an interesting time-based power-up system, but fighting always turns into a series of hurry up and wait exercises.

On the plus side, you can see monsters wandering around the world, instead of the usual idiotic random encounters, and can actually circumvent them at times. There's a card-based magic system with potential, but there's little innovation and the game system isn't even up to date with current console RPGs. *Septerra Core* has suffered from its lengthy development cycle, and the compelling story can't cover up the cracks in graphical style and control.

— JASON D'APRILE *likes blue hair as much as the next guy*

GRAPHICS

Good-looking locales and character graphics, but lousy animation. Some colorful special effects.

SOUND

The voice actors aren't bad, but their lines are horrible. Music is decent.

DEPTH

Linear gameplay, with the usual bits of RPG elements, but it's predictable, shallow stuff.

DESIGN

Tries way too hard and ends up feeling like a clone. There's virtually nothing to give it distinction.

RATING 5.3

Pluses

- → Decent graphics and sound
- → A well-rounded world history with lots of epic stuff
- → You can never have enough blue-haired chicks

Minuses

- → Having to fuss with shields
- → Almost too much to keep up with
- → Taking out bombs is frustrating

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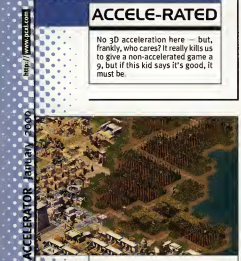
DEVELOPER -->	Sierra
PUBLISHER -->	Impressions
REQUIRED -->	P133, 32MB RAM, 4X CD-ROM, 357MB hard drive, 16-bit SVGA graphics
IDEAL -->	PII 266, 64MB RAM, 8X CD-ROM drive, 597MB hard drive

Pharaoh

They thought cats were gods — how smart could they have been?

ACCELE-RATED

No 3D acceleration here — but, frankly, who cares? It really kills us to give a non-accelerated game a 9, but if this kid says it's good, it must be.



Harvest from the Nile fast, before workers drown.



My Mastaba: Before. A pretty sad sight, no?

ANCIENT EGYPT

WHAT RULES AND WHAT DROOLS

RULES --> Anubis — Ultra-cool god of the dead with the head of a jackal
DROOLS --> Bast — Wimpy goddess of the home with the head of a cat

RULES --> Being Moses — Didn't you watch "The Ten Commandments"?
DROOLS --> Being Ramses — Suffers 10 plagues and gets butt kicked by that "Planet of the Apes" guy

RULES --> Women in see-through linen skirts. Rrrow!
DROOLS --> Guys in see-through linen skirts. Ick

RULES --> Being buried in a Pyramid
DROOLS --> Building a Pyramid

RULES --> Constant danger from cool critters like scorpions, asps and crocodiles
DROOLS --> Constant danger from angry hippos

I've got so many good things to say about Impression's *Pharaoh* that I'll let you insert your own "Walk Like an Egyptian" joke. Simply put, *Pharaoh* is a breathtaking achievement in the city-building genre pioneered by *SimCity*. (Look for that quote in upcoming ads!)

At the most basic level, *Pharaoh* is merely a prequel to Impression's *Caesar* series. As Pharaoh, you guide the Egyptian civilization from raw, unlettered tribes on the banks of the Nile through the eventual construction of magnificent monuments like the Pyramids or the Sphinx. You place roads, buildings, and various city services in a logical plan and watch as your little people move in, take jobs, and magically bring your city to life. All told, *Pharaoh* offers well over 50 different types of buildings.

What makes the game special is how Impressions managed to capitalize on the strengths of the previous games and cleaned up most of their game balance flaws. In *Caesar III*, the religious aspect was so out of whack that a patch was released to enable gamers to turn it off. *Pharaoh*, however, makes this a more integrated part of gameplay. Each of the buildings and the professions they represent work with each other in an intricate dance of mutual dependencies. The beauty of the game, and particularly its interface, is that managing the relationships is a challenge in a good way. You always have plenty of information at your disposal, with Overseers describing the mood of the city and giving tips on improvement.

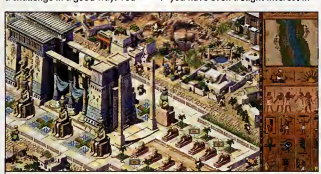


After a while, your cities become truly beautiful.

Coordinating the building of a Pyramid or a Sun Temple is a Herculean task. The monuments themselves (which are often too big to fit on the screen) take years of game time and hours of real time to achieve. The level of immersion and the feeling of accomplishment when you finish such a structure is extraordinary.

Still, the game's not perfect. The hieroglyphics are just too damn obscure to ever become as intuitive as they should. Combat, as in *Caesar III*, is an afterthought. Sound is rather pedestrian and the music is repetitive. The game also hangs for a long time when saving. All these are quibbles, though. If you have even a slight interest in recreating vast historical civilizations, you will love *Pharaoh*. It's not on par with the actual Pyramids, but it comes pretty close.

— ALLEN RAUSCH *was born in Arizona and moved to Babylonia*



The Luxor Hotel in all its grandeur.

GRAPHICS

Beautiful buildings, statues, and animated people make each city a work of art.

SOUND

Competent, though the music does get repetitive.

DEPTH

The Grand Canyon. It's an incredibly detailed city-building sim with plenty to do and see.

DESIGN

Brilliant. Everything from the interface to game balancing is done incredibly well.

RATING 9

Pluses

- --> Incredibly well balanced and fun
- --> Beautiful graphics and animations
- --> Marvelous interface

Minuses

- --> No real strategy in combat
- --> Occasionally hangs when loading animation or autosaving
- --> Obscure hieroglyphic symbols

Pyramids have been tourist traps 7,000 years. Visitors included Julius Caesar and Napoleon

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ROGUE SPEAR

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MISSED ME?





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Red Storm Entertainment

DEVELOPER -->	G2M Games
PUBLISHER -->	Wizard Works
REQUIRED -->	P200, 32MB RAM, 200MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM
IDEAL -->	Low expectations, few teeth, and unhealthy love of Harleys

Harley Davidson: Race Across America

Grab a hawg, you dawgs!

ACCELE-RATED

While the graphics in *Race Across America* are accelerated, they don't seem to benefit that much. Bottom line: This ride looks like it came out in early '97.



Harley chicks on Route 66. That's what it's all about.



While my experience astride a chopper may be decidedly limited (I've taken my cousin's Sportster out for a monstrously enjoyable ride a couple of times), I've played more than a few racing games in my life. So this logically gives me the right, at least in the inflated ego where I spend most of my time, to pan *Harley Davidson: Race Acrass America*.

Now hold on there, all you fallen Hell's Angels. Set down your wrenches, your broken beer bottles, your bloody police batons. We can discuss this rationally, I'm sure. You won't get any argument from me about how there's nothing more invigorating than the thrill of gunning the throttle and feeling the wind twist your hair and the sand grit your teeth as you zoom down the desert highway. (This is apart from a really great *Quake* deathmatch, but that's why I'm the gaming geek).

That's what makes *Harley Davidson: Race Acrass America* such a disappointment. Unfortunately, most of the time this game feels more like puttering about on a scooter than thundering around on a hawg.

The gameplay is simple: Choose your Harley (or design your own in one of the cooler aspects of the game) and then race it down the un-open road, avoiding traffic, making fuel pit stops, and staying ahead of the three other riders. You can take on individual practice races or attempt one of the three tours, culminating with the Harley mecca to Sturgis.



Graphics are mostly a dim disappointment.



Deciding when to refuel is about the only strategic element.

There are six bikes from which to choose, and during a tour game, you can upgrade them with your prize winnings. Other than making the appropriate stops when your fuel gauge runs down, there's not much strategy. Running into another biker or an oncoming car won't do anything other than knock you off the road. Come on, I want to see how this leather jacket holds up during a cement drag!

The graphics are mediocre — the horizon popped up along the drive and I experienced several "white-outs" during race changes (the screen would go all white and I'd have to reload the game). The bikes and drivers are well rendered, as is some of the scenery, but overall it's more eyesore than eye-candy.

The "classic" road soundtrack would have been a great place for some actual bona fide classics, but instead we get some pseudo-classic rock muzak that really seems out of place.

All told, it didn't fulfill the experience the license promised, and left me jonesin' for a real Harley ride. I better give my cousin a call.

***—JOEL STRAUCH** thinks helmet laws are stupid, but that could be because he's hit his head quite a few times*

GRAPHICS

This hawg's eye view of the world is passable, but that's about it.

SOUND

While the sound effects were nicely done (gotta love the sound of the Harley revving up), the soundtrack is devoid of character.

DEPTH

As shallow as an Arizona swimmin' hole in the middle of July. Drive, stop for gas, drive.

DESIGN

The game is easy for the average user to pick up, and sporting the Harley license, will sell huge.

RATING 4

Pluses

- --> Riding a hawg. Oh yean
- --> Designing your own bike is sweet
- --> LAN and Internet play

Minuses

- --> Not much to it
- --> Graphic problems
- --> Feels hawg-tied

Dave Campos holds the speed record for motorcycles, clocking 322 MPH on a Ruxton Harley

You want a rocket up your ass?
No! You want Online Arena!

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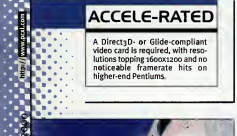
DEVELOPER → Reflections Interactive
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
REQUIRED → P233, 32MB RAM, 80MB hard drive, 16X CD-ROM, 4MB D3D card
IDEAL → PII 366, 64MB RAM, 165MB hard drive, 16- or 32MB D3D card

Driver

Slap the pedal to the metal with this stellar arcade racer

ACCELE-RATED

A Direct3D- or Glide-compliant video card is required, with resolutions topping 1600x1200 and no noticeable framerate hits on higher-end Pentiums.





Graphics, though good, aren't quite as detailed as *Midtown Madness*.



Oy, this is gonna hurt. If you gain enough speed and climb the right hill, you can hurdle over cars, '70s cop show-style.

The car most stolen in the U.S. is the Chrysler Jeep Grand Cherokee. PC ACCELERATOR. Just say'n.

Fortunately, for computer game fanatics like you, technology has finally caught up to the imaginations of game designers. From creating and riding roller coasters (*Sim Theme Park*), to becoming a gangsta (*Grand Theft Auto 2* or *Kingpin*), virtually anything is possible. In *Driver*, a direct PlayStation port, you assume the role of Tanner, a covert cop in the '70s who poses as a driver-for-hire to infiltrate a nationwide crime ring. Your beast of burden is a gas-guzzlin' muscle car, screeching down the streets of San Francisco, New York, Los Angeles, and Miami, dodging (or otherwise) pedestrians, ignoring street lights, and careening around monuments.

While there are multiple standalone mini-games, such as Survival, Trail Blazer, or the aptly titled Carnage, the real meat of the game is dubbed Undercover, spanning roughly 50 missions total. First you must complete a series of tough obstacles in a parking garage to prove you're worthy, before sitting in as the wheelman for the infamous Castaldi mob family. Missions such as driving the getaway car following a bank heist or delivering a package within a predetermined amount of time are then assigned. In one memorable mission, the goal is to scare the bejeezus out of an informant by taking him on a ride he'll never forget!

One of the coolest innovations in *Driver* is a bundled Director's Mode which allows you to record and edit your favorite missions by strategically placing cameras around the city. A map in the lower right-hand corner aids your navigation around the accurately rendered cities. Along with the weather effects, lens flare, and detailed buildings, little extras such as flying hubcaps and pedestrians that miraculously jump out of the way all add to the fast paced atmosphere.

All is not peachy chauffeuring in the life of crime, however. First, without the patch that's already available, you may experience crappy issues like corrupted textures, collision oddities, and problems with the Director cams. Also, in a single-player game this entertaining, we have to deduct a point for its lack of a multiplayer option. How cool would it be to indulge in a cat-and-mouse chase with your buddies over a LAN or via the internet (especially since *Midtown Madness* did this really well)?

Still, *Driver* is a blast, especially if you've been itching for something with a little attitude in which to sink your criminal fingernails.



Dynamic lighting really "shines" during night missions.

For maximum enjoyment — **PCXL** style — play it on a fast PC, with a solid steering wheel, big monitor, and good set of speakers.

— **MARC SALTZMAN** *learned the hard way, along with Smith and Salman, that beer and fried cracadille is a bad combinatian*

It's Called "Driver"?

You can tell the ol' neurons weren't firing in the brains at Reflections when they sat down to give this game a name, so we here at PCXL thought of other stupid game names to surface over the past few months.

12 O'CLOCK HIGH → What's this? Doing crack at lunch?

RACER → *Driver. Racer.* What's next? *Shagger? Bugger?*

FINAL FANTASY VIII → If it's the "final" fantasy, how could there be eight of them? Explain that!

BAYMAN 2: THE GREAT ESCAPE → If Ubi Soft wants this lovable character to be a hit on this side of the pond, they gotta do something about his name

EXTREME SOFTBALL → Can you say "oxymoron"?

COW HUNTER → Er ... no comment

GRAPHICS

Impressive recreations of each city's real counterparts.

SOUND

Awesome sound effects and music add to the immersion factor.

DEPTH

Lots of missions, mini-games, and the ability to edit and save chases.

DESIGN

As a direct port from PlayStation, this console-esque driving game is a refreshing change.

RATING 8

Pluses

→ Fresh and fun gameplay
→ Lots of varied missions, side games
→ "Director" mode is a blast

Minuses

→ No multiplayer
→ Missions can get quite difficult
→ Can't customize car; automatic trans only; arcade-y handling

DEVELOPER →	Cinematix
PUBLISHER →	Eldos
REQUIRED →	P233, 32MB RAM, 400MB hard drive, 8X CD-ROM, 8MB DirectX compatible video card
IDEAL →	PII 400, 128MB RAM, 24X CD-ROM, D3D accelerator card

Revenant

One lifetime isn't enough ... to justify another *Diablo* clone

ACCELE-RATED

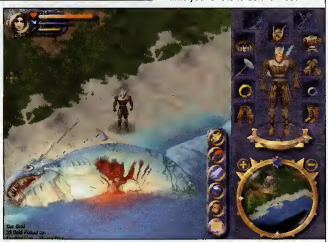
Hardware acceleration is not required in *Revenant*, but without it the game is both slow and not nearly as good looking — much like my last date.



Have at thee with my Sword of the Caressing Breeze.



Geez, say one wrong thing to these green rock guys and they get all up in your face!



I am not accustomed to the ways of the wild.

Betcha can't wait for *Diablo II*, right? Well, add *Revenant* to the list of games (alongside *Darkstone*) to tide you over. As one of the more colorful and lively of the *Diablo*-alikes, it takes the core gameplay and design of *Diablo* and adds eye-poking 3D effects and *Tekken*-style fighting game maneuvers. The result is a game that aspires to achieve escape velocity from "*Diablo* clone" land, but merely makes it to low orbit.

Much of the appeal of *Diablo* was generated by its multiplayer capabilities and character development. *Revenant*'s linear RPG format gives only limited control over lead character Locke's stats, so most of the game's innovation falls into its unique combat system and away from its 'return from hell' plot line.

Instead of the mouse clicking mayhem of *Diablo* (I) and *Darkstone*, *Revenant* has opted for a more platform-style (you know, sorta like *Legacy of Koin*) system involving several types of attacks (such as slash, chop, block, etc.) and special combos.

While fighting you can circle strafe, dodge, and perform these attacks, depending on your range and how much damage you want to do. Also, there's a fatigue bar that adds strategy by making you time your shots to do the most possible damage instead of clicking like mad — a full fatigue bar means more damage, and if you're exhausted, you'll just scratch 'em.

All of this is painfully taught by Master Jong, a rather charming NPC in town, who is happy to beat the hell out of you whenever you practice with him. Fortunately, he can only damage your pride.

You can also cast spells *Diablo*-style with a simple right mouse click. It's a fun system with plenty of control, but it still has problems. If you don't have your desired spell memorized, or programmed into one of the four spell hotkeys, forget about buying enough time in the unwieldy interface to get the one you need. Even on our fastest system (a PIII 500), *Revenant* froze up for a second when things got hairy, which is when you can least afford for this to happen.

A few other things about the game design are just plain annoying, mostly due to the interface. The inventory system is clunky and takes too many mouse clicks to manage. Movement is done by holding down the right mouse button rather than a streamlined click to move system. Collision detection when moving is spotty and doesn't feel solid. Most frustrating is the mini-map which is blurry and practically useless. What, am I not worthy of a full-screen map?



Hello, I come seeking the Magical Codpiece of Bentuzlar.

So if you're waiting for *Diablo II*, wait for *Diablo II*. *Revenant*'s single character premise holds up for a fairly entertaining fantasy tale, but doesn't have real legs.

— **ED LEE** *wonders how many times he used the word* "Diablo" *in this review*

GRAPHICS

A nice variety of *Diablo*-type tilesets.

SOUND

Decent sound effects and music, but voice acting is awful.

DEPTH

Single player, simple story, and mouse-gripping combat make for an entertaining one-shot.

DESIGN

We've seen it all before ...

RATING



Pluses

- Combat system is fast paced and fun
- Lots of spells
- Extensive gore

Minuses

- Completely linear
- Not enough character customization
- Little replay value

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COMPUSA

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DEVELOPER -->	Pitbull Syndicate
PUBLISHER -->	Infogrames
REQUIRED -->	P166, 32MB RAM, 70MB hard drive, D3D accelerator with 4MB RAM, 4X CD-ROM
IDEAL -->	PII 300, Voodoo 3 accelerator, 3D sound card

Demolition Racer

Smashing, baby!

ACCELE-RATED

Go back to *Re-Volt* if you want slick 3D graphics. We're unsure why *DR* needs an accelerator, as there really wasn't a perceivable difference between software and D3D mode.



The Little Fruit Coupe takes a blow for crappy racing games everywhere.



Hope that insurance is paid up, Chumprock.



I'll teach you to cut me off. Burn, bastard!

Another boring racing game is one thing, but *Demolition Racer* looked to be different. You see, I like to break things. I like to set things on fire. I like to wreck stuff. The idea behind this game is that you get to do all these things behind the wheel of a car. Sign me up.

The intro movie treats you to a few minutes of a '50s-style driving school powered by a speed metal soundtrack. It's like taking your driver's license test in the parking lot of a Slayer concert. Exponential cool factor points were immediately awarded, then rescinded once the game got under way.

Ah yes, it's yet another developed-for-the-PlayStation-but-hey-we-can-throw-it-on-the-PC game from Infogrames. When are they going to stop this madness? The graphics, in a word, suck. The car models have low, low poly counts, with nasty two-color paint jobs. The eight cars have varying levels of armor, handling, top speed, and acceleration, but since your chosen car becomes the default for all AI drivers, it doesn't much matter what you pick.

Yes, cars do "deform" and "crush," but thanks to poopy real-time damage effects, it's not in a realistic manner. Damage is always doled out in the same order: Hood pops up, hood breaks off, back



Excuse me, but I think you dinged my door.

window shatters, engine begins smoking, car blows up. If Infogrames has the time to trademark something this uninspiring, they're obviously surfing porn sites during work hours like the rest of America.

Points are earned for vehicular vandalism in the mud pit arenas and tracks that follow familiar themes like a parking lot, junkyard, and freeway. You're awarded X number of points for colliding with another car at X speed, then tossed a few paltry bones for causing them to hit the wall or spin out. The only redeeming factor to this system is that, very rarely, you manage to nail the massive Death From Above bonus by landing on top of another car and instantly, gratifyingly nuking it.

The physics engine is much like Jennifer Love Hewitt: Bouncy in parts, yet oddly underdeveloped elsewhere. Cars tend to fly about the track as if molded from space-age Super Ball polymers. Colliding with another car may simply slow you down, or it may instantly flip you onto your side. Every bump, barrier, and obstacle is just waiting to spin your car in the wrong direction or send you careening out of control. Two-ton cars fling through the air like pink panties at a Ricky Martin concert.

Despite these craptacular issues, *Demolition Racer* is still fun, in a dopey sorta way. The night I installed it, I played until 3:00 AM. And in a few weeks, when it's at bargain bin $9.99 (and only then), you too can enjoy some mindless annihilation.

*— **CHRIS KRAMER** wishes you could run into cops in this game*

GRAPHICS

Well, they sorta look like cars ...

SOUND

Great band selection, but the samples are looped and endlessly repeated.

DEPTH

Good for brief moments of blowing off steam, but not a title we'll remember next year.

DESIGN

Gas. Brake. Handbrake. Horn. Go smash.

RATING 5

Pluses

- Rewarded for driving like a jerk
- Death From Above!
- Playing Chicken in a parking structure

Minuses

- Flaky physics
- PlayStation port — and looks it
- Shallow as a kiddie pool

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DEVELOPER →	Novalogic
PUBLISHER →	Novalogic
REQUIRED →	PII 266, 64MB RAM, 280MB hard drive, 4MB video card
IDEAL →	PII 400, 128MB RAM, 475MB hard drive, full duplex sound card for Voice Over Net, 32MB TNT2

Delta Force 2

A sequel that still only shows promise of its full potential

ACCELE-RATED

The engine supports some 3D accelerators, but there's still no anti-aliasing. Also, getting decent performance out of a Voodoo card is likely to require a patch.



Ready, aim ...



Night duty sucks.



You complete morons. Look behind you. Oi. You. With the gun.

Like many action gamers, I liked *Delta Force*. I forgave its voxelicious look, its penchant for having characters disappear into the scenery, and its lackluster and impersonal knife kills that had promised so much. I overlooked the archaic interface that led to fairly entertaining team-based multiplayer games. I was even kind to the blundering AI. Why this level of acceptance? Because, fundamentally, *Delta Force* was fun. Playing a Green Beret on covert operations in various world trouble spots, the action gameplay was incredibly easy to pick up, yet strategic enough to require some gray matter exercise.

Tragically, all of the above makes reviewing *DF2* very, very simple. I'm up to speed on the graphics, sounds, and game styles in a second, since they're virtually identical to the first game. Let's pause a moment for a little rant: We've seen it with *Rogue Spear*, we've seen it with *Spec Ops 2*, and now *Delta Force 2* follows the same pattern. Last year's games kicked off the squad-based combat rush and this year's sequels add more of the same. They improve areas of critical complaint, add new scenarios, and are released to a theoretically eager fan base who are anxiously waiting the true sequel that's hopefully in development behind closed doors.

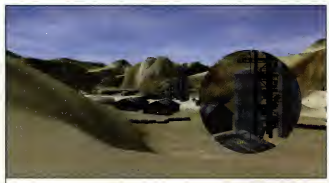
Keeping a burgeoning franchise in gamers' minds is important, but let's quit with the sequel nonsense and call a spade a spade. Or in this case, an expansion pack. In *DF2*, Novalogic has improved many of the mission designs by incorporating a host of impressive buildings and other structures such as chemical refineries, townhouses, and barracks. Tents have a realistic solidity so they won't block bullets (though you still can't shoot through the railings in stairs, for example). In fact, the developers use these structures quite effectively to increase the difficulty level over the previous game — it's not just a case of throwing in more enemies, but of placing them creatively within the new buildings.

To its credit, *DF2* is still incredibly easy to get started, but even easier to navigate with the addition of the commander screen (which is supposed to let you control your squad mates, but they're useless, so it acts as an expansive map system). The 19 quick-start missions have varied objectives (rescuing hostages, destroying trains, and slaughtering masses of terrorists evidently trained by imperial stormtroopers) and the two campaigns are incredibly challenging as you chase chemical weapons across nations around the globe.

It's a shame that the puffy sound effects of the various moving vehicles don't match the fantastic weapon sounds. It's also a shame that the much-vaunted Voice Over Net technology for 50-player multiplayer gaming on NovaWorld didn't work at ship and barely works with the two patches thus far. And really, while the voxels do give great detail to distant objects and buildings, up close they look like shit. Not only that, but to avoid stutters in gameplay you'll need a beefy system.

Again, I'll forgive many of these sins, as I still found myself trying to complete several brutally difficult missions at 3:00 AM. That's a good thing, right?

— **ROB SMITH** *wants them ta make the knife kill more meaty*



See, voxels don't look all bad. Just ignore the jaggedy edges.

GRAPHICS

Great detail on the buildings and the rolling terrain. Crawling through blocky grass just doesn't work.

SOUND

Great weapon effects but dire vehicle and terrorist sounds.

DEPTH

Branching mission options supply constant variation, but dumb squadmates means you're on your own.

DESIGN

Same as the original. Exactly the same.

RATING 7

Pluses

- → Challenging mission structure
- → Creative use of new buildings
- → Parachuting in to combat

Minuses

- → System hog
- → Voice Over Net barely works
- → More enemies covers shoddy AI

All the sequels mentioned here (except *Spec Ops 2*) scored lower than their originals

I'M A PLAYER

NOT A FIGHTER



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DEVELOPER -->	SSI
PUBLISHER -->	SSI
REQUIRED -->	P233, 64MB RAM, 275MB hard drive, 8X CD-ROM, 8MB 3D card
IDEAL -->	PII 300, 16X CD-ROM

Panzer General: 3D Assault

The war game anyone can enjoy, even if you think war games are ass

ACCELE-RATED

Units in *Panzer General: 3D Assault* are rendered in 3D; it doesn't seem like a big 3D workout, but still demands an 8MB accelerator.





The new headquarters screens provide one-stop force management.

When did I become **PCXL**'s resident wargame grognard? I'm only 23 years old, for God's sake, and I've already been pigeonholed into the role of Crusty Old Turn-Based Wargamer. Well, if it means games like *Panzer General 3D Assault* keep rolling my way, it's a worthwhile sacrifice of the babes and glory that come with action gaming.

SSI, eager to make its products attractive to an increasingly war-weary market, has finally made the step to 3D-rendered units and tacked the spiffy word "Assault" to the title. It's the most complete overhaul so far of the venerable *PG* engine.

The 3D graphics are a nice change, and allow you to move the view around to get a good look at the battlefield. The individual units of the U.S., German, British, French, and Russian armies are gorgeous, but the terrain is blurry and blotchy. It sometimes looks like immaculately crafted tanks are zooming around through pea soup. This is the obvious sacrifice of ditching painted 2D backgrounds, which were always such an eye-pleasing element of the *Panzer General* series. I'm still not convinced that the old painted 2D look was obsolete ... frankly, it was prettier to look at, and did a better job of creating an immersive battlefield. But who am I? I'm just the little guy "The Man" is trying to keep down.



Prestige bonuses allow you to inflict serious damage.



The battle for Anzio, where we liberated Gia's grandparents.

Ambivalent as I am about the 3D switch, there is no knocking the design tweaks. They're almost all for the better. Gone, for example, is the need to conform to ludicrously tough objective deadlines in order to secure Major Victory. There was nothing more frustrating than kicking an opponent's ass all over the battlefield, dismantling his forces, then rolling into the final objective hex in 13 turns and thus being denied a Major Victory.

Another big change is in the commander structure of the game. Individual unit leaders are on the new Prestige Points system, which means you now have to cultivate prestige points by nursing the careers of able leaders. The reward is that these commanders can apply combat bonuses in battle, like Overrun ability or Suppressive Artillery talent. This is a much more realistic and rewarding way to handle battles, and gives you a real, tangible battlefield explanation for the formerly theoretical prestige system.

The nuts and bolts of gameplay are kept pretty much intact. The required strategic chops are much lower than those needed for most turn-based wargames, while the graphics and sound are frisky enough to provide a nice visceral punch when the fit hits the shan. If you've refused to buy a turn-based wargame because of The Fear, note that The Fear will be assuaged by this game.

— DAN MORRIS gets prestige points for this review

GRAPHICS

Well-crafted 3D units; blurry backgrounds (an even trade, I guess).

SOUND

Good voice work and generally interesting rumbly explodey war sounds.

DEPTH

Deep WWII campaign structures — a lot of wargaming to be done.

DESIGN

New, more sensible objective structure and prestige system make the game even more accessible.

RATING 8

Pluses

- Addition of 3D units
- Simpler, more realistic objective structure
- Excellent prestige points

Minuses

- Blurry battlefields
- Not the most authentic wargame in the world
- No huge advances in game design

Dan Morris received a 92 a grade level from MS Word rating system (same grade as his dates)

When you're the best, everyone wants a shot at you.



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- PC Gamer, Dec. '99

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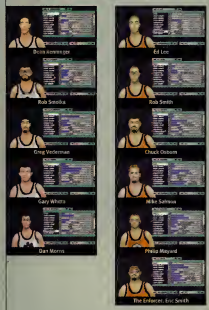
Falcon Northwest

Settling it on the court

THERE AIN'T NOTHING A LITTLE 5-ON-5 CAN'T SOLVE

Throughout time there have been many great debates, struggles, and eternal questions which have remained unanswered — you will be left in the dark about one of the most compelling no more. The PCXL *NBA Live* Showdown is a program designed to be the ultimate judge. Now we can finally answer the three questions that weigh heavily on our, (and perhaps your) minds every day.

PC GAMER VS. PC ACCELERATOR

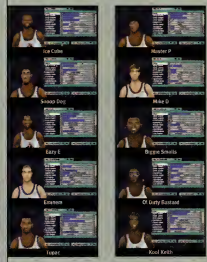


CONFLICT --› The *PC Gamer* editors falsely claim that they kick *PC Exaggerator's* (their loving name for our fine magazine) ass in almost every game they play. *PC Accelerator* rightly claims that *PC Lamer* (our loving name for their pitiful rag) is a bunch of pansy asses, who only win games that require general fat assed-ness and overwhelming cowardess-ness.

OLD WAY --› *PC Accelerator* would either pummel the staff of *PC Gamer*, or the *Lamers* would take to the high-ping servers where the results would be similar, except *PC Gamer* (the shameless cads) would quit whenever they were losing (which is often).

NBA LIVE WAY --› As usual, *PC Gomer* camped near the basket like a bunch of cowards while Mike Salmon, Philip Mayard, and even Hector Salazar rained down jump shot, after jump shot. The embarrassing final score (108-36) sounds a lot closer than it was.

WEST COAST VS. EAST COAST

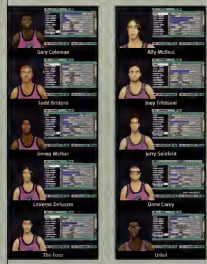


CONFLICT --› A bunch of millionaire bloods and crips dueling it out for no good reason. The controversy surrounding the shooting of Tupac Shakur still raises the temper of both groups.

OLD WAY --› Drive-bys and rap-offs — either way an extremely ugly solution.

NBA LIVE WAY --› Master P's experience as a professional basketball player (12th man for Toronto Raptors last season) and Biggie Small's contradictory size were too much for the homies from the left coast as they rolled 102-76 (two dead West Coast players had no affect).

'80S SITCOMS VS. '90S SITCOMS



CONFLICT --› Who's funnier?

OLD WAY --› Bar discussions around the nation would never find a definitive final answer and Gary Coleman would likely punch a bus driver, while Todd Bridges robbed her blind (assuming the bus driver was female and that either of the two were out of prison).

NBA LIVE WAY --› Admittedly the '90s Sitcom Stars were the most comedic team, but only because they were so awful. The rotund Carey, uncoordinated Urkel, and skeleton-like Ally were dominated by the hardened criminals of the '80s Sitcom Stars. In the end, Jimmy Walker was Dyn-O-Mite as the Duran Duran years cruised to a 114-45 victory over our modern day comedic geniuses.

OTHER CONFLICTS TO BE SOLVED

NATURE VS. NURTURE --› Nature wins when a tribe of Ugandans demolishes a well-coached team of scientists.

CREATIONISM VS. EVOLUTIONISM --› Jesus sacrificed the game for our sins as Darwin's boys won easy.

THE STANDINGS

EA's 2000 round of titles continue to come in and stand atop the standings. We wish someone would step up and make this a little more interesting. Michael?! Fox? Are you listening?

	GAME TITLE	W	L
BASKETBALL	NBA Live 2000	1	0
	NBA Inside Drive 2000	0	1
FOOTBALL	Madden 2000	1	0
	NFL Fever 2000	0	1
GOLF	Links LS 99	7	0
	Jack Nicklaus 6	6	1
	PGA Championship 99	5	2
	Tiger Woods 99	4	3
	Golden Tee Golf	3	4
	Pro 18 World Tour	2	5
	Links Extreme	0	7
HOCKEY	NHL Hockey 2000	1	0
	Powerplay 98	0	1
BASEBALL	High Heat 2K	4	0
	Triple Play 2K	3	1
	Microsoft Baseball 2K	2	2
	Hardball 6: 2K Edition	1	3
	Baseball 2K Edition (VR)	0	4
SOCCER	FIFA 2000	1	0
	Fox Sports Soccer 99	0	1

DEVELOPER --›	EA Sports
PUBLISHER --›	EA
REQUIRED --›	P166, 32MB RAM, 90MB hard drive, 4MB graphics card, and the ability to believe lies like this
IDEAL --›	PII 500, 128 MB RAM, and a gamepad

NBA Live 2000

The new and improved face of the NBA

ACCELE-RATED

Despite its laughably low publisher-suggested requirements, *NBA Live 2K* needs a beast. If you don't have a 3D card or 128MB of RAM then expect a slide show.



"The Kid" just dominates.

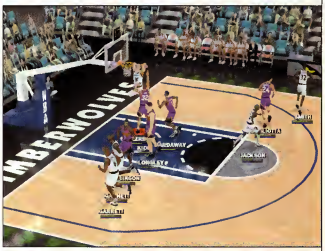


Triple double 2K: 15 pts, 12 rbs, 10 misdemeanors.

Of all the sporting glory we've enjoyed on our various game systems, the one sport that has never come close to getting it right with any semblance of realism is basketball. And while *NBA Live 2000* still falls short in many key areas, it is the best we've seen to date.

If nothing else, *NBA Live 2K* is thorough beyond belief, with season play, 3-point contest, 1-on-1, franchise mode, custom teams, and about every option and stat you could ever imagine. The amazing completeness of the game is undoubtedly its greatest strength.

However, where *NBA Live 2K* has stepped it up is where it really matters — on the court. For years, basketball games have been simplistic dunk-fests that rarely, if ever, captured the real feeling of professional basketball. One-on-one moves, matchups, and post-ups are fundamental elements you see every night watching the NBA, yet games have left these areas pretty much untouched. Every year EA seems to be getting closer to the game we really want, and *2K* is easily the best so far.



In *NBA Live*, white men can jump — obviously a design flaw.

The finest new feature is the improved post-up game where you can back down players, spin, and put up a shot off the glass. But while the animations are excellent, it is still too difficult to use with the regularity that you see in the NBA.

Graphically, *NBA Live 2K* shines occasionally, yet falters severely at other times. The obvious attention paid to the players' faces results in some eerily real looking mugs, but at what cost? Where is the fat polygon model for Oliver Miller? The super muscled polygonal David Robinson? Instead, all of the bodies look like the freaky Will Perdue model — not a pretty sight.

Still, this is the best looking hoops game available, but with plenty of room for improvement in subsequent versions. The animations are decent and the once-slippery "out of control" feel of the series has vanished, though the pre-set animations still take over as you lose control of a player spinning wildly out of bounds.

Minor complaints aside, *NBA Live 2K* is a deep and immersive experience. The create-a-player feature alone is worth the price of the game, and the franchise mode means several seasons worth of gaming. It ain't perfect, but then again, neither is the NBA.







Painful videogame reminder for Shaq: *Shaq Fu* — shame on you!

GRAPHICS

Freakily real faces, but the bodies are still very unconvincing.

SOUND

Didn't like Reggie Theus as a player, he's even worse as an announcer.

CONTROL

Much better than previous years but still a weak point in the series.

REALISM

Decent, but needs work on AI and one-on-one match-ups.

RATING 8

Pluses

- --› Deepest b-ball game ever made
- --› Halftime show features scantily clad cheerleaders
- --› Post-up game is much better

Minuses

- --› Computer is pretty easy to beat
- --› Realistic facsimile of Scottie Pippen's face
- --› Network code is still pretty crap

DEVELOPER --›	EA Canada
PUBLISHER --›	EA Sports
REQUIRED --›	Pr66, 16MB RAM, 50MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM
IDEAL --›	PII 400, 128MB RAM, 375MB hard drive, Voodoo3 or TNT2 graphics card, MS Sidewinder gamepad

FIFA 2000 Major League Soccer

How to take a great franchise and spoil it

ACCELE-RATED

The polygonal players really need a 3D accelerator to give them any kind of realistic look. D3D support means TNT2 is the best, but all cards perform similarly.

The *FIFA* franchise is an annual ritual for me. Every successive year (or three times during World Cup years) I eagerly wait to discover what EA didn't manage to get in this time around. While this *2000* iteration is still fundamentally the best playing, best looking and best feeling soccer game on the planet, there are several astonishing steps in the wrong direction.

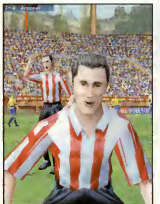
In hopes of giving this world-wide brand some much-needed localization, EA Sports has snagged the Major League Soccer (MLS) license. What they should have done is included the women's teams instead, stuck sports bra-clad Brandy Chastain on the box cover in her exulted moment of World Cup '99 triumph, and scored huge with the soccer moms and kids (*FIFA 2001* for certain). Sure, the *FIFA* experience, with its 800 worldwide club teams, and 40 international teams, may be a little lost on the U.S. market, but with 12 MLS teams added, the list of possible game combos is phenomenal.

So we're on this U.S.-friendly kick, and EA Sports has hired ESPN soccer commentator Phil Schoen for the play-by-play, aided by U.S. Women's World Cup star Julie Foudy for the color commentary. Frankly, it stinks. It stinks so bad it ruins many of the new aspects. Boy, does it blow. Chunks and chunks. Sucks ass. Pathetic. Appalling. What the hell were they thinking? So, when you're playing one of the great "classic" matches — say, Brazil 1970 versus England 1966 or New York Cosmos 1972-75 versus Manchester Utd 1968 — the joy of controlling the likes of Pele, Bobby Moore, and Denis Law is lost. Due to the crap commentary they become random polygon characters, not soccer legends reliving great moments.

Many great moments from the '99 version have also been lost due to a desire to simplify the game. Gone are the offensive in-game play-calling options (to call a wing-back overlap or through ball run), though the defensive offside press remains an option. Also absent are moves such as faking a shot, intentionally diving, or stepping over the ball. This makes no sense.

Certainly the graphics are typically incredible, the player animations are fluid and even the fans in the stadiums are animated. More depth has been added by a fuller training option for planning offensive and defensive plays. Greater depth in the league modes, where a high-finishing position lets you progress to international competition, is a definite step forward.

Still, the tragic commentary "talent" just ruins it. Sure, I'm going to keep playing, but volume-less until I can snag the European release. Bloody Yanks!



So, you scored. Woohoo.



Set pieces offer a chance for set plays that can be very effective.



GOOOOAAAAAALLLLLL!



Shielding the ball adds a more physical angle, though it's ineffective against computer AI.



GRAPHICS

Great touches such as sepia and duo tones give the classic games a sense of history.

SOUND

Solid stadium chanting, but oh-my-god, the commentary is the worst change to this franchise in history.

CONTROL

Made simpler by removing advanced options, which is absolutely, positively, unfor-fricken-giveable!

REALISM

On higher difficulty levels, the passing pace is a little too extreme and scoring can be way too easy.

RATING 7

Pluses

- Still great look
- Classic teams for soccer purists
- Enhanced season progression

Minuses

- That clueless commentary
- Removal of high-end moves and options
- God, that commentary sucks

In case you couldn't tell, Rob "We call it football" Smith wrote this review

NASCAR Racing 3

DEVELOPER --> Papyrus
PUBLISHER --> Sierra
REQUIRED --> P166, 32MB RAM, 2X CD-ROM, 80MB hard drive space
IDEAL --> PII 300, 64MB RAM, 3D card, 255MB hard drive, TNT2 or G400, steering wheel and pedals

Round and around and around and around...

ACCELE-RATED

The best-looking graphics any sports game has yet conjured, and with EA that's saying a lot. Voodoo2 scored slightly higher than TNT.

When flipping channels on tragically uneventful weekends, I occasionally stop to watch NASCAR races. As I watch, various questions drift through my mind ... Don't they get bored driving in circles? What do drivers do if they really have to "go"? Are they equipped with in-car cups, or are they highly trained athletes who excel in the art of bladder control? *NASCAR Racing 3*, the latest installment of this huge franchise, is the chance to find out.

All set with the required wheel and pedals, setup takes a few seconds, and soon there's the realization that you're actually driving. Not just Sunday driving, but *really* driving. Realism is key in a sim, and this is one realistic sim. You can feel every turn, hear that tall-gating car creep up on you oh-so-slowly, and feel the power of accelerating down the straight-away. This, I honestly believe, is what it feels like to drive fast in a circle.

Racing against the 42 licensed drivers helps the realism, as does the accurately modeled tracks. Disappointing licensing issues mean there's no Daytona or Pocono tracks, though the other 28 Winston Cup and Busch Grand National circuits are featured.



Man, I hate traffic!



Mmmm, donuts...





The field pulls another amazing gentle left — what a sport!



Whoops ... Did I do that?

Despite graphical issues from *NASCAR 2* still not being fully addressed, most of the graphics on those tracks are top-notch. Tires leave lasting skid marks, and smoke clouds up your field of view. And a collision damage model does a decent job of skewering the cars after fender-benders.

Despite its hardcore sim origins, *NASCAR 3* is refreshingly newbie-friendly. The detailed manuals tells you how to setup your chassis, and how everything from the temperature of your tires to the amount grill-tape you apply will affect your car's performance. But even with that help, don't expect to be winning races from the green light. The AI will definitely give you a run for your money.

As good as the racing is, the game's still not perfect. Multi-player support is sadly lacking, seeming to require a broadband connection to get anything resembling playable performance. The AI also tends to get stuck. Upon driving to an accident, AI cars often tend to stop while pondering how to get around.

But does this take away from the core racing? No. Is it less real because of the lack of official "Winston Cup" and "Busch Grand Nationals" licenses? Yes, but only by a minuscule amount. To any NASCAR race fan, this is plain old fun. It puts you right where the action is, with emphasis on the correct elements. You want racing? This is it, pure and simple. Now, if you will excuse me, I have to go to the restroom.

GRAPHICS

3D acceleration gives good frame rates and allows playability on lower-end machines. 2D sprites still suck.

SOUND

Who needs "Sounds of the Ocean" to relax when you've got the soothing sounds of a highly tuned engine?

CONTROL

Corner hard and corner fast. Definitely responsive. Force-feedback is a plus.

REALISM

Hard-nosed NASCAR racing at its best. Any more realism, and you'd need a sponsorship.

RATING 8

Pluses

- --> Best NASCAR simulation out there
- --> Responsive controls
- --> Cars are fully tweakable, from the skin down to the engine

Minuses

- --> Graphics "glitches"
- --> AI sometimes gets "stuck"
- --> Not a full license

This old Rogue Spear

FIXING UP AND RENOVATION YOUR VERY OWN LEVELS

In Part 1 of our Ultra-Dry Developer Strategies series, find out how to get the most from the Rogue Spear mission editor with this complete walkthrough, penned by Red Storm's Philip Hebert. Although you still can't create missions from scratch, you can customize the hell out of the existing ones. Without further ado ...

GENERAL INFORMATION

Open the file in your *Rogue Spear* directory called RSEDITOR.exe to start the map editor.

All distances are represented in centimeters unless they are otherwise specified.

The map window sometimes needs focus before any action can be done in the map. To do this, simply move the cursor over the map window and click a mouse button once.

Waypoints or Icons are selected by right-clicking on them.

NOTE --> Not all visible waypoints are selectable at one time. For instance you can only select a landmark if the Landmark Tab is the active tab.

Rotate the camera, in the 3D view, by holding down the right mouse button and dragging the mouse around.

CREATING A NEW MISSION

To create new missions first open a map. To do this, go to the menu bar under File Æ Open Map. You can now create a new mission by clicking File Æ New Mission. A general properties dialog box will be displayed. This dialog allows you to edit general mission stuff like plan map, rendering, and roster data. The two most important buttons in this dialog are the "difficulty settings exist" and "is adversarial mission" check boxes. These boxes are located under the General tab.

If you want your mission to have three difficulty settings then check the "difficulty settings exist" box. If the mission is an adversarial one, i.e. it has spawn points and bases, then check the "Is adversarial mission" box. Click OK to save your changes.

You can get back to this handy dialog at any time by simply looking on the menu bar for Mission and General Properties.

CREATING A TEAM

A team consists of one or more characters of certain type. In this example, we will be creating a team of terrorists.

Step One: Creating the team

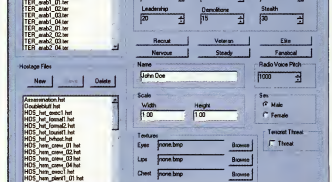
Make sure you are looking at the Character Tab. Under the new button is a box with entries for "Hostage Teams" and "Terrorists Teams," Highlight "Terrorist Teams" and click the new button. A dialog should appear that prompts you for a unique team name. Type in "TerroristTeamx" and press OK.

Step Two: Editing a team

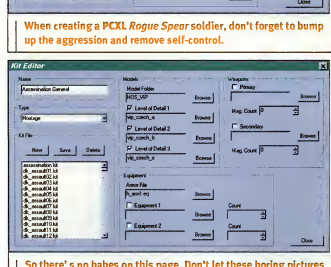
Next, be sure the newly created team is highlighted and press the "General Properties" button. A dialog will appear which allows you to change the team's name and other flags that determine how the team appears in the game's plan map. To accept any changes press OK or else press Cancel.

Step Three: Adding a character to a team

If the desired team is highlighted, press the NEW button. A dialog will appear that prompts you for the new character's name. Enter in a unique name and press OK. Now select the newly created character and press the "General Properties" button just as you did with the team. A character's general properties allow you to change the



When creating a PCXL *Rogue Spear* soldier, don't forget to bump up the aggression and remove self-control.



So there' s no babes on this page. Don't let these boring pictures scare you — this is really useful shit!

KEYBOARD COMMANDS

W	Move camera forwards. Both 2D and 3D view.
S	Move camera backwards. Both 2D and 3D view.
A	Move camera left. Only in 2D view.
D	Move camera right. Only in 2D view.
Q	Rotate camera left. Only in 2D view.
E	Rotate camera right. Only in 2D view.
[	Zoom camera in. Only in 2D view.
]	Zoom camera out. Only in 2D view.
Up Arrow	Up one level.
Down Arrow	Down one level.
-	Tilt camera down.
=	Tilt camera up.
F6	Go to first waypoint.
F7	Go to previous waypoint.
F8	Go to next waypoint.
F9	Go to last waypoint.
Delete	Delete selected waypoint or object.
Backspace	Delete selected waypoint and go to previous waypoint.
F2	Toggles object information display in the status bar.
F3	Toggles draw all room in 3D view.
P	Toggles path finding when placing waypoints.
R	Resets selected object's rotation.
G	Places selected object on the ground.

Send in missions you've created to letters@pcxl.com — we'll put the five best on our disc

character's name, assign an initial stance and alertness state, and attach the actor and kit files. Go ahead and pick a new actor and kit file. To accept your changes press the OK button.

Step Four: Editing plans

Teams have three different types of plans. The first is the start location plan, which consists of any number of starting locations and facings. The second is the default plan, which tells the team what to do when not alerted by any outside action. The third is a trigger plan, which tells the team what actions to take when certain conditions are met.

ADDING START LOCATIONS

Pick the "Start Locations" entry in the "Current Plan" box to make it the active plan. Now, start placing starting locations by left clicking on the 2D map. Notice that the Icon is flashing, this means that it is the selected or working waypoint. To change the facing of the start location, right click anywhere on the map in the direction you want the team to start facing.

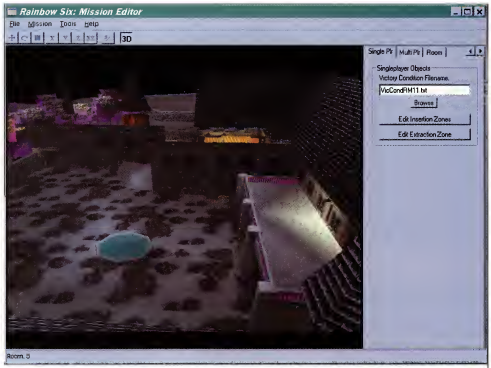
CREATING PLAN STEPS

A plan step is a single element that is combined with other plan steps to make up a plan. Back to our example, change the current plan to the "Default Plan" and press the Add button. This brings up the list of plan steps. For this example we are going to create a plan where the team patrols a short path while stopping at the end before continuing.

First step will be a "Begin Token" step. "Begin Token" allows a series of plan steps to be executed in a loop or track. For the purposes of the example, it will be a track. All the follow plan steps will be inserted between the beginning and end of this step.

Insert a "Patrol Path" step. "Patrol Path" steps are unique in that they are the only steps that require you to place waypoints on the map. After creating the step make sure it is highlighted and place two waypoints on the map.

NOTE --> Only the selected plan step can be edited in the map.



Setting up a multiplayer map where everybody on both teams start in a small room can be quite fun. Tactics are simple: The first one to pull the pin wins – the rest die.

Insert a "Guard Spot" step. Notice how the interface changes depending on the type of step selected. For "Guard Spot" a duration is needed so give it 5 seconds. There is also an optional crouching flag that can be set.

NOTE --> Since we are using a track and the guard spot is at the end, the team will stop for a total of 10 seconds before continuing on the path.

CREATING A TRIGGER PLAN

A trigger plan is a plan that is executed when any one of its conditions are met. To create a trigger plan select "New Trigger Plan" from the current plan box. This will pop up a dialog so you can name the new plan. For the example, let's call the new plan "DefendCurrentLocation". After pressing OK a new dialog will appear that lets you edit the trigger plan's parameters. Trigger plans are ordered by their priority. The most important plans should have the highest priority or the lowest number (0). If the conditions are met then all lower priorities are thrown out.

Sometimes you may want your team to pick between multiple plans that cannot be ordered based on priority. For this case give the plans the same priority and check the "Remove Same Priority Triggers" button. An example of such a case is when a team of terrorists has two escape routes and they should pick the correct one based on what zone the threat is coming from. For this case you would set up a trigger plan for a threat in each zone and give them the same priority and set the same priority flag. So when a threat is found in any one of the zones, the correct trigger plan will be activated and the terrorist will not try to go back to the other plan if another threat is found. This basically keeps the terrorists from constantly going back and forth between plans. The process to add plan steps to a trigger plan is the same as the default plan.

TIP --> To make the team execute the trigger plan before doing anything else, put a "Change ROE" plan step at the beginning with the ROE State set to Advance.

CREATING A VEHICLE

Step One: Creating the vehicle

Make sure you are on the Vehicle Tab and click the "New" button. Now enter in a unique name for the vehicle and press the OK button. The new vehicle should now appear in the list. Now make sure it is highlighted.

Step Two: Editing the general properties

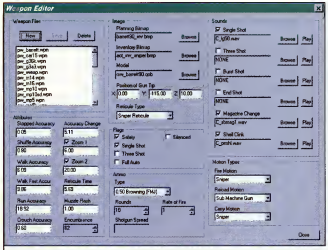
Click on the "General Properties" button to bring up the dialog. Through this dialog you can change the name of the vehicle, attach a vehicle file, assign passengers, and set if it stops for people. First browse for a .VCL for the new vehicle. The .VCL file specifies all the vehicle data like armor values, sounds, and models.

Next, set the "Stops for human" flag if the vehicle is suppose to stop for a person crossing in front of it. Finally select all of the passengers that will ride in this vehicle. Make sure you don't pick more passengers then the vehicle can hold. This data can be found in the .VCL file.

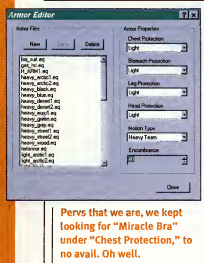
NOTE --> Only car vehicle types are supported.

Step Three: Creating a plan

Now add a "Patrol Path" plan for the vehicle. All vehicles must have at least one "Patrol Path" plan step to get a starting location and facing. The first point on the path



Notice that we checked "Magazine Change." So should all *CGW* readers (and any other lame game rag readers).



Pervs that we are, we kept looking for "Miracle Bra" under "Chest Protection," to no avail. Oh well.

represents the starting location and the second determines the initial facing. After placing the first waypoint, go into 3D-map view and, voila! You should see the vehicle's model.

CREATING A LANDMARK

Make sure you are on the Landmark Tab. Click the "New" button. Left click on the 2D map to place the landmark icon. Enter in the localized name and description.

NOTE --› After placing the icon, it can be moved by first deleting it, using the Delete key, and then re-placing it.

CREATING A MISSION OBJECTIVE OBJECT (MSO)

Step One: Creating the MSO

Make sure you are on the Mission Obj Tab. Click the "New" button.

Give the MSO a unique name and set the type. The MSO type is the action that can be done on the object. ie. A bomb would have a "Disarm Bomb" type and a phone could have a "Plant Bug" type.

EXAMPLE --› Create a MSO named "Bombs" and give it a "Disarm Bomb" type. Now attach a .MSO file to it. Browse for "bomb_sticky_blue.mso". To place the MSO in the map go into the 3D-map view and click on a floor. A blue box should appear where you clicked.

NOTE --› A MSO can be replaced by first deleting it, then re-placing it using the method above.

NOTE --› By putting the string "--Manipulate" in the MSO name, it cannot be selected in the game's plan map. This is useful when placing bombs that you don't want the player to manipulate.

Step Two: Moving and rotating the MSO

After placing the MSO, it can now be moved around and rotated about the X, Y, and Z-axis. Do this by clicking on the translate or rotate button on the toolbar and then selecting an axis.

Then, while holding down the left mouse button, drag the mouse around. Try translating the object along the X-axis. Now try rotating the object around the Y-axis. To the left of the 3D button on the toolbar is a snap rotation button. This allows you to rotate the object about the selected axis in 90-degree increments.

NOTE --› Pressing the R key will reset an object's rotation.

Step Three: Editing the dependants

MSOs can have other objects that are activated when it is manipulated. To attach these objects click on "Edit Dependants" and a dialog will pop up displaying all the objects that can be attached. Dependants are broken up into five types.

When the MSO is manipulated it activates the other MSOs. Before that point, the dependant cannot be manipulated.

NOTE --› There is a special case built in where when a Switch MSO is manipulated, any dependant "Disarm Bomb" MSOs will be detonated if not has not already been manipulated.

Sound Emitters

3D sound to play

Touchplates

Touchplates are triggered as if they where triggered normally.

World Objects

Doors can be operated.

Rooms

Lights in a room can be turned off.

NOTE --› This is not supported.

CREATING A TOUCHPLATE

Step One: Create a new touchplate

Make sure you are on the Touchplate Tab. Click the "New" button. Enter in a unique name for the touchplate. Go into 3D-map view and left click on the map to place the touchplate model. A white box should appear on the map.

Step Two: Sizing the touchplate

A touchplate can be translated and scaled in the X, Y, and Z-axis using the movement buttons on the toolbar. Try translating and scaling the touchplate in all directions.

Step Three: Setting all the flags

By default a touchplate can only be triggered once. The "Pressure Trigger" flag allows the touchplate to be activated every time something intersects it. Don't forget that touchplates can also be created so that certain types of characters cannot trigger it. Just check the "ignore..." boxes.

Optional: A text file can be attached to a touchplate so that it displays a message in the game's chat when it is activated. This can be handy if you'd really like to annoy your fellow players.

Step Four: Attaching triggered objects and teams

Teams and other objects can be triggered when a touchplate is activated. Example: One use of triggering a team from a touchplate is to set up a trap so when a team reaches an area, terrorist reinforcements will be activated.

NOTE --› For this to work the team must have the "Starts Active" flag unchecked. Other objects such as doors and sounds can also be triggered by touchplates.

CREATING 3D SOUNDS

Step One: Creating a new emitter

Make sure you are on the Sounds Tab. Click the "New" button. Go into 3D-map view and left click on the map to place the sound emitter model.

Step Two: Editing the properties

Press the "Edit Properties" button. Give the emitter a unique name. Set the playback type. Attach a sound file by clicking on the Browse button. Set sound type.

NOTE --› The AI uses the sound type to determine how they will react to hearing the sound.

CREATING AND RESIZING A ZONE

Creating the zone

Click and hold down the left mouse button over the 2D map and place the first corner of the zone. Drag the mouse to create the zone. Release the mouse button when done.

Sizing the zone

Right click on one of the control corners. The selected control corner will start blinking when selected. Hold down the right mouse button and drag the mouse to resize the zone.

NOTE --› To remove a zone, select one of its control points and press "Delete."

CREATING AN INSERTION AND EXTRACTION ZONE

Go to the Single Plr Tab and follow the steps in the "Creating and resizing a zone" section above.

Creating an extraction zone

Create the zone and check the "Exists" box. Check the "Required" box if the teams must

get to the extraction zone to win the mission.

MULTIPLAYER EDITING

Adding spawn points

Click the "Edit Spawn Points" button and start placing points by left-clicking on the 2D map.

Removing spawn points

Right click on the spawn point icon so it starts flashing and press the "Delete" key.

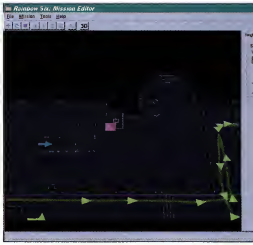
Adding base pairs

Click the "Edit Base Pairs" button. Press "New" to create a new base pair. Give the base pair a description by pressing "Base Description." To create a zone, see "Creating and resizing a zone" for the blue side. Give the zone a description by pressing "Side Description." Click on the "Gold" button and repeat step 3 for gold zone.

EDITING ROOM PROPERTIES

Select one or more rooms from the "Room List" to edit their properties. Rooms can be selected by picking them from the list or left clicking on the 2D map. Notice that the camera centers on the room that you selected and that its 2D floors are highlighted.

NOTE --> Multiple rooms can be selected by holding down the CTRL key while selecting the rooms from the list.



Okay, it all looks good in the plan, that is until one of you big jerk-offs starts improvising.

Add rooms by checking the "Zone" button and entering a number from 0-100. Als use zones for patrolling and restricting their movement to designated areas.

IMPORTANT --> Beware of using heavy rain or snow in very large rooms because it causes longer load times and puts a bigger demand on memory.

EDITING DOOR STATES

Go into the 3D-map view and put the cursor over a door. Hold down the CTRL key and press the left mouse button. A dialog will appear that allows you to edit the door's state.

Locked

Door starts locked.

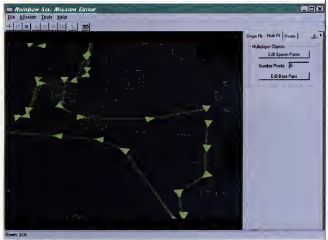
Sealed Shut

Door cannot be opened or destroyed.

NOTE --> This is useful in multiplayer games for sealing off access to large sections of a map.

Starts Open

Door always opens at the beginning of the mission.



Follow these steps and become the envy of your pseudo-country friends at this year's line dance competition.

THE ONLINE NUISANCE

Join any good servers lately? You've probably experienced the numbing isolation of multiplayer gaming where no one really tries to stand out from the crowd. Here we give you a few ideas that will establish yourself and in the process, hopefully piss some people off. Remember: If you can't be good, you might as well be annoying. Here's a few different methods to spice up the monotony of constant fragging in *Quake III Test*

THE BELLIGERENT FRAGGER

Step 1 --> At the end of a game, when everyone types their lame little "gg" message, type in something needlessly belligerent like "you all suk" or "l--k u"
Step 2 --> This will piss everyone off and they will hopefully go out of their way to try to kill you in the next game
Step 3 --> Go on to win the game
Step 4 --> Some people will undoubtedly quit out of shame. Proceed to mercilessly taunt them with cutting barbs like "l--k yr mom" and "suk my dik"



A FACE EVEN A MOTHER COULDN'T LOVE

THE UNCOMFORTABLY NICE GUY

Step 1 --> Everytime you get killed or even wounded take the time to type in a lengthy and heartfelt compliment to your assailant. Something like, "Wow!" Steves162 your skill with the rocket launcher is indeed impressive. In all my months playing this fine game I have never met a more talented player. I hold you in the highest regard"
Step 2 --> Steves162 (or whoever) will respond in one of three ways. Either he will ignore you (most likely), say "tx" or assume you are being sarcastic and type in something like "f--k u"
Step 3 --> No matter what the response you should type in something like this, "Did anyone else see that frag? Steves162 is a genius and it's about time the rest of you losers give him some respect. He has more raw ability, intelligence, and charm in his pinky than the rest of you can even fathom. I love Steves162 and I'm not afraid to say it to the whole world!"
Step 4 --> The collective homophobic tension on the server will likely result in a mass exodus leaving you in first place. You win! If it doesn't work the first time then continue making uncomfortable professions of undying love and respect until they cave in
Step 5 --> For added fun follow Steves162 from server to server with the same words of sweet love

WHEN SCREENSHOTS GO BAD

Every month the editors of PCXL will scour the gaming world for a screenshot that is funny, strange, erotic, or just plain "funky." Then we'll present it to you, our loyal readers. Do you think you can do better than the ultra-hip, extreme, on-the-edge PCXL staffers? If so, send in better captions and pictures to letters@pcxl.com



This is one suspect that is definitely going down.



AGE OF EMPIRES II: AGE OF KINGS

IT'S NOT A SHAME, IT'S A STRAGEDY!™

So, you bought the sure-to-be-a-bestseller *AOE II*, did you? Good decision. It's a pretty entertaining game. There's a ton of depth in the multiplayer game, almost like playing the classic turn-based strategy game *Civilization* in realtime. You have to build your civilization through multiple time periods while gathering resources, researching technologies, and of course, waging war. Sound a bit familiar? Nod your head "yes." When you think about it, *AOE II* is really a combination of three other well known games ...

PART 1:

CIVILIZATION(S)

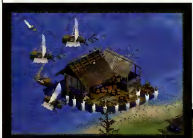
We ranked the 13 civilizations in eight categories: Buildings, Economy, Cavalry, Archers, Infantry, Monks, Siege, and Ships, according to how many advances in each category are available to them throughout the game. Their ranking is how they place in comparison to the other civilizations. These numbers alone won't tell the story, because there are other variables (like your playing style), but they do show which ones are good at what. Try to pick a civilization that most closely matches your style of play. (T=tied)

BRITONS

Buildings →	9 (T-2nd)
Economy →	4 (T-7th)
Cavalry →	5 (T-8th)
Archers →	5 (T-4th)
Infantry →	5 (T-1st)
Monks →	3 (T-6th)
Siege →	2 (13th)
Ships →	5 (T-6th)
Overall →	38 (7th)

Unique unit → LONGBOWMAN
I am Arthur, King of the Britons, and this is my loyal manservant Patsy. It's fun if you pretend that the game-winning relics are actually the Holy Grail. The Britons' main bonus is that foot archers get a +1 range bonus in the Castle Age, and another +1 in the Imperial Age. That means the Elite Longbowmen will do 7 damage with a range of 8, and that's without any other improvements. Not bad.

Verdict → Best for defensive play, because of the longbowmen and the fact that their lack of siege ability hurts in the long run.



Traps are the only way to go once fish get scarce.

BYZANTINES

Buildings →	7 (T-7th)
Economy →	5 (T-4th)
Cavalry →	7 (T-2nd)
Archers →	6 (T-1st)
Infantry →	5 (T-1st)
Monks →	5 (T-1st)
Siege →	3 (T-8th)
Ships →	7 (1st)
Overall →	45 (1st)

Unique unit → CATAPHRACT
Ooh, look at the big fancy Byzantines with the 1st place in all those categories! As you can see, their military is quite strong and well rounded. The Cataphract is a heavy cavalry unit with stats just slightly worse than a Paladin, but they do get an attack bonus vs. infantry. Their team bonus of 3x Monk heal speed is nice, and so is their building hit point bonus. So if the Byzantines are so damn great, how were they destroyed in real life, huh?

Verdict → A solid choice all around, mainly because you're not going to win a lot of games by sitting on your ass (The only exception: Wonder freaks).

CELTS

Buildings →	8 (T-5th)
Economy →	5 (T-4th)
Cavalry →	5 (T-8th)
Archers →	2 (13th)
Infantry →	4 (T-9th)
Monks →	1 (T-11th)
Siege →	5 (T-1st)
Ships →	5 (T-6th)
Overall →	35 (T-10th)

Unique unit → WOAD RAIDER
Freeeedom! Outside of being presented as the *Braveheart* guys in the tutorial, which is pretty cool, the Celts are the siege frickin' masters of *AOE II*. Here's why: Their civilization bonus is that siege weapons have a 20% faster fire rate. That makes a big difference in siege standoffs, particularly with small numbers of trebuchets on both sides. Another useful bonus is that their infantry moves 15% faster. The Woad Raider is an infantry unit that is basically Mel Gibson's *Braveheart* sidekick cloned over and over.



"We are no longer the Knights Who Say Nee! We are the Knights Who Say Icky Wicky Ca Ching!"



"One Chinese Wonder and steamed rice. You want egg roll too?"



Fortify your castle with towers and walls for the best possible defense.

Verdict --> The only choice for siege nuts. Back up your sieges with lots of infantry.

CHINESE

Buildings -->	9 (T-2nd)
Economy -->	4 (T-7th)
Cavalry -->	7 (T-2nd)
Archers -->	5 (T-4th)
Infantry -->	5 (T-1st)
Monks -->	4 (5th)
Siege -->	3 (T-8th)
Ships -->	5 (T-6th)
Overall -->	42 (T-2nd)

Unique unit --> CHU KO NU

True to conventional wisdom, the Chinese have increased population (and a food shortage) from the get-go and are more efficient at gathering food and researching technologies. Their unique unit is a real asskicker — they're like crossbowmen on crack. They're almost worth playing just to get a squad of these going. They've got a nice bonus in their decreased technology research cost.

Verdict --> If you're big on researching improvements, give these a shot.

FRANKS

Buildings -->	7 (T-7th)
Economy -->	3 (T-11th)
Cavalry -->	6 (T-5th)
Archers -->	3 (T-11th)
Infantry -->	4 (T-9th)
Monks -->	3 (T-6th)
Siege -->	4 (T-5th)
Ships -->	5 (T-6th)
Overall -->	35 (T-10th)

Unique unit --> AXEMAN

These poor saps are the only civilization to not place 1st in any category. The throwing axemen have two nice bonuses, though, with a 25% decreased castle cost and +20% hit points for knights. However, unless you love building giant knight rushes, it's hard to justify picking the Franks for any reason. The axemen aren't that great either, because their range is so terribly low.

Verdict --> Someone's got to be the worst and we're quite happy it is these guys.

GOTHS

Buildings -->	3 (13th)
Economy -->	6 (T-1st)
Cavalry -->	4 (T-10th)
Archers -->	5 (T-4th)
Infantry -->	4 (T-9th)
Monks -->	2 (T-9th)
Siege -->	3 (T-8th)
Ships -->	5 (T-6th)
Overall -->	32 (13th)

Unique unit --> HUSKARL

Outside of wearing black and listening to Marilyn Manson, what are the Goths known for? Well, there's the Huskarl, an infantry unit that is the most effective archer-killer in the game. The Elite Huskarls have a whopping six points of base-piercing armor. With their substantial infantry discount, you should crank these suckers out. On the downside, they have the crappiest infrastructure in history. They can't even build stone walls, for chrissakes.

Verdict --> Play against archer-happy opponents to piss them off.

JAPANESE

Buildings -->	6 (T-10th)
Economy -->	1 (13th)
Cavalry -->	4 (T-10th)
Archers -->	6 (T-1st)
Infantry -->	5 (T-1st)
Monks -->	5 (T-1st)
Siege -->	3 (T-8th)
Ships -->	6 (T-2nd)
Overall -->	36 (T-8th)

Unique unit --> SAMURAI

Overall, they have the best infantry in the game because of their civilization bonus — faster infantry attack speed. And their best infantry unit happens to be the super-cool Samurai, who know all and see all. The Samurai have a fast attack to begin with, so compounded with the civilization bonus they can just mow people down. They also have an attack bonus against other unique units. The biggest downside of the Japanese is their poor economy, which means you'll have to micro-manage even more.

Verdict --> You should try a Samurai rush at least once.

MONGOLS

Buildings -->	6 (T-10th)
Economy -->	3 (T-11th)
Cavalry -->	6 (T-5th)
Archers -->	4 (T-7th)
Infantry -->	5 (T-1st)
Monks -->	1 (T-11th)
Siege -->	5 (T-1st)
Ships -->	6 (T-2nd)
Overall -->	36 (T-8th)

Unique unit --> MANGUDAI

Don't let the 5th place showing fool you, the Mongols have the most effective ranged cavalry in the game. It's all they're good at, though, so you should build lots of 'em — in particular, the Mangudai. They're juiced up cavalry archers, and are fast as hell — perfect for hit and run raids.

Verdict --> Mobility and range are their advantages.



The "Box" formation is great for defending weaker units.



Elephants are tough but they get converted WAY too easily.



Players who tend to dig in and wait for the shit to hit the fan will appreciate the Teutons' defensive attributes.

PERSIANS

Buildings → 7 (T-7th)
Economy → 6 (T-1st)
Cavalry → 8 (1st)
Archers → 4 (T-7th)
Infantry → 3 (13th)
Monks → 1 (T-11th)
Siege → 4 (T-5th)
Ships → 6 (T-2nd)
Overall → 39 (6th)

Unique unit → WAR ELEPHANT
A lot of people play the Persians just to get an army of War Elephants. This is fine and good, since these beasts have upwards of 600 hit points and a 20 attack rating — they are this game's equivalent of tanks. But since they're so slow, you have to watch out for enemy Monks (or massed pikemen too).

Verdict → The best race at razing (err ... destroying) buildings due to the slightly comical, yet highly effective elephant rush.

SARACENS

Buildings → 7 (T-7th)
Economy → 3 (T-11th)
Cavalry → 6 (T-5th)
Archers → 6 (T-1st)
Infantry → 5 (T-1st)
Monks → 5 (T-1st)
Siege → 5 (T-1st)
Ships → 5 (T-6th)
Overall → 42 (T-2nd)

Unique unit → MAMELUKE
Here's another fancy-pants civilization we've never heard of. They've got almost all the military upgrades money can buy, which can really pay off in the long run. The Mameluke is okay, kind of like a mounted short-range cavalry-killer. To make up for their advantages, none of their civilization bonuses are that great, so it's a pretty even trade-off.

Verdict → Well rounded and strong, if you don't mind a below-average unique unit.



Battles get confusing, so use the [cntrl] # to group units.

TEUTONS

Buildings → 9 (T-2nd)
Economy → 6 (T-1st)
Cavalry → 4 (T-10th)
Archers → 3 (T-11th)
Infantry → 6 (T-1st)
Monks → 5 (T-1st)
Siege → 5 (T-1st)
Ships → 4 (T-12th)
Overall → 41 (5th)

Unique unit → TEUTONIC KNIGHT
Defensive turtlers, this civilization is for you. They get almost all the cool building upgrades, their towers can garrison twice as many units, and they get free murder holes. This means a lot of Teuton players will get a wall around their base with towers around the perimeter. To top it off, the Teutonic knight is a nearly indestructible walking tank, so if they do manage to somehow break through your walls, you have a ton of Schwarzenegger-quoting brutes to tackle.

Verdict → Building Wonders and holding off attacks until time is up is the best way to win with Teutons — cheezy, but effective.

TURKS

Buildings → 10 (1st)
Economy → 5 (T-4th)
Cavalry → 7 (T-2nd)
Archers → 4 (T-7th)
Infantry → 4 (T-9th)
Monks → 3 (T-6th)
Siege → 3 (T-8th)
Ships → 6 (T-2nd)
Overall → 42 (T-2nd)

Unique unit → JANISSARY
The Turks are kind of like an embryonic NRA, while the Janissary is a beefed up hand cannoneer. They have all the gunpowder units like Bombard towers and cannons. The gunpowder units have +50% hit points and gunpowder tech costs 50% less, thanks to their civilization bonuses. The Janissaries are pretty effective against almost all units, but not that great against buildings.

Verdict → If you like guns and cannons and plan on waging infantry war, then the Turks are your best shot.

VIKINGS

Buildings → 8 (T-5th)
Economy → 4 (T-7th)
Cavalry → 3 (13th)
Archers → 4 (T-7th)
Infantry → 5 (T-1st)
Monks → 2 (T-9th)
Siege → 4 (T-5th)
Ships → 4 (T-12th)
Overall → 34 (12th)

Units → BERSERK/LONGBOAT
Someone told the Vikings they were special because they're the only civilization to get two unique units. The berserk is a tough infantry unit that can heal itself over time, and the longboat has similar stats to a war galley but fires faster.

Verdict → Water-based maps are where the Vikings do best, but weak infantry/other units make them pretty useless on land.



Use the environment to your advantage, such as trees for walls.

PART 2:

SIMBASE

AOE II puts more emphasis on base building, resource management, and technology researching than most RTS games, which is why multiplayer games can take so long. Some players will go so far as to build just their defenses and the base and try to win through building a Wonder. Thus, if you're so inclined, you can spend more time on your base than you do your army.

DARK AGE
GETTING TO THE FEUDAL AGE IN UNDER 5 MINUTES

Having a good build order early on is important, especially if you think that your enemies may try an early rush or offensive barracks. First off, immediately start one of your villagers on a nearby tree while you scout to look for any forage bushes. Once you find those, build a mill right next to them and get your remaining villagers foraging. Start building villagers until you have at least 10, then build a house. If there are any sheep nearby, get some villagers on those too. Food is your main priority and bushes and sheep provide the fastest food income at this stage of the game. Build a barracks when you have the wood.

FEUDAL AGE
GETTING TO THE CASTLE AGE IN UNDER 10 MINUTES

The first two ages are really all about getting to the Castle Age as fast as possible. You're still going to need lots of food, but now you'll need some gold, too, as well as plenty of wood to construct all the buildings you need to support your growing economy. Resource gathering should be your main priority (think of it as storing food away for the winter). So keep your hive busy and your drones working, and definitely get a defensive presence up as well, with a few watch towers and some walls, if you have the stone. Never neglect troops because if you get jumped and can't immediately respond, you've already lost. Keep up lots of farms around your mill, and get some fishing boats up if the map allows. A marketplace can be handy for getting just enough of one resource or the other to make that jump into the Castle Age.

CASTLE AGE
SPEND, SPEND, SPEND

Hope you've built up a nice nest egg, because boy are you gonna need it. In the Castle Age you will spend like you've never spent before, in probably the most critical phase of the game. With so many things to build and research, you have to make some quick decisions in which way you are going to head. Here are some ideas for your consideration:

→ It's a good idea to start improving your troops. If you have a civilization bonus favoring one type of troop, you may want to think about specializing, but otherwise, keep your forces balanced.

→ Increase your villager population, because you'll need lots of stone and gold.

→ Research all the improvements you can afford for your troops.

→ Get some crossbowmen manning your towers and use them as your main defense.

→ Get a siege workshop up even if you aren't planning on using it

SUDDENLY TREBUCHET

Our new theory about life is that there's absolutely no problem or situation that a trebuchet (giant big-ass catapult) can't resolve. It doesn't even have to fire — it can solve problems by sheer presence.

For example, we can't help but think the (now on "hiatus") sitcom "Suddenly Susan" could have been saved if they had introduced a trebuchet as a new character in their Chinatown digs.

The wacky gang would show up to work one morning and it would just be sitting there in the office. The first show would be completely devoted to everyone yelling "What the heck is this trebuchet doing here?"

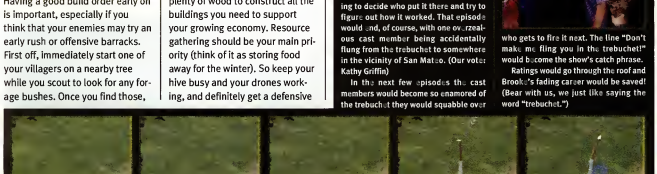
By the third show they would stop trying to decide who put it there and try to figure out how it worked. That episode would end, of course, with one overzealous cast member being accidentally flung from the trebuchet to somewhere in the vicinity of San Mateo. (Our voter Kathy Griffin)

In the next few episodes the cast members would become so enamored of the trebuchet they would squabble over



who gets to fire it next. The line "Don't make me fling you in the trebuchet!" would become the show's catch phrase.

Ratings would go through the roof and Brooke's fading career would be saved! (Bear with us, we just like saying the word "trebuchet.")



This may just be one of the most important things you see during a game. Just make sure the trebuchet belongs to your army.



Ship combat can either be a huge part of the game or a huge waste of your resources on unused units.



Destroying a castle may take a while, but oh what a feeling when you see that bastard come crumbling down.

for a while, because mangonels are great for defense.
--> Monks are great all-around utility units, so a monastery is a good bet. Build them in pairs since they can't heal themselves. Don't bother with the improvements unless you're planning on building lots of them.
--> If there's water nearby, you have to decide what naval presence you're going to have.
--> If you do decide to build ships, you might get more use out of a few fire ships than war galleys, since they are more effective against other naval units (not all races have fire ships however)
--> Stable units are tough and fast, but also expensive. But don't go overboard on the knights and cavalry archers.
--> A university can give cool upgrades to your infrastructure like masonry, chemistry, ballistics (key for siege units and ships), and murder holes.
--> Start remote resource camps away from your town center, in out-of-the-way locations where they hopefully won't be noticed. Put up a guard tower with archers to protect it against small attacks you may encounter. It's important to set up gold and stone camps since they are limited on the map and can be especially crucial for late game building.
--> Lots of infantry can get the job done as your last line of defense, especially if they're set on patrol mode and you've been researching improvements. The squires' improvement will boost their speed by 10%.
--> Keep researching improvements at the blacksmith to maximize the life span of your army.
--> Don't neglect the town center improvements, the wheelbarrow/hand cart line is the single most economy-boosting improvement in the game.
--> Make an effort to upgrade your walls to fortified walls and your towers to guard towers.
--> A castle will let you start up your unique units, and it's great for defense – don't hesitate to put it on the front lines.
--> Don't forget to increase productivity at the lumber and mining camps — they will greatly speed up your income.

IMPERIAL AGE
TREBUCHET TIME

Despite all the great advancements available to you in the Imperial Age, it really should be called the Age of the Trebuchet. Yet another *StarCraft* siege tank-ripoff (betcha don't know a history-based game could rip off sci-fi, didja?), the trebuchet is a big-ass catapult with incredible range and damage that you have to pack and unpack — and it can only move when packed. You make it at the castle for the low, low price of 200 wood and gold. Even the most passive or uninspired of SimBase turtlers will be able to generate an offense with just a couple of these. Here are some more tips:
--> This is the age when your regular units upgraded to the max can compare favorably to unique units, so upgrade.
--> Conscription at the castle increases your units build speed by 33%.
--> The new improvements at the university are all quite good, but if we had to pick one, it would be the siege engineers (+1 siege range, +20% damage).
--> The heavy versions of the siege weapons are all worth it if they are available to you.
--> Bombard towers are a good first line of defense vs. ships.
--> If the enemy is going crazy with monks, research faith (+50% conversion resistance).
--> If you're going completely nuts with monks, don't forget to research illumination (+50% rejuvenation speed) and block printing (+3 conversion range).
--> If you've got enough excess resources, you can start up a Wonder. If it stands for 200 years, you win. So before you start building, make sure your defenses can withstand the giant attack that will come shortly.
--> Cannon Galleons are totally kick-ass. They are like the boat version of trebuchets, and are incredible at taking out waterside bases and troops.



Here's a sure fire way to get your enemies to attack.



Mix up units to strengthen your forces.

PART 3:

COMMAND AND CONQUER

OK, now that we've gotten the building out of the way, it's time to roll your sleeves up and get into the nitty gritty details of combat. Keep in mind that getting your troops into combat is going to take some planning. There aren't any magical teleportation devices or flying machines here.

SCOUTING AND INTELLIGENCE → You start with a cavalry scout for a reason. Scout your immediate surroundings for resources and terrain features, locate the quickest way to get to allies, then start looking for your enemies' town halls. Next, build some cheapo outposts at areas that are bound to be high traffic — this will give you plenty of warning if the enemy's on his way. Start up a dock if there's water and use fishing boats to scout as well. Intelligence is so important, it's scary.

MIXED UNITS → Each unit type, whether it's infantry, cavalry, or archers, has a weakness that can be exploited, so build elements of all three for a well-rounded force. Infantry are great at wading in and mixing it up, and at higher levels will offer the most efficient bang for their buck outside of siege weapons. Archers are well suited for defense, but can be a potent offensive force if used correctly — especially cavalry archers, who have unbeatable versatility in their mobility and range. The key to offensive archers is having a shitton of them and attacking units and using their range — great for taking out an entire town of completely innocent villagers.

Of course, these mixed troops can be placed in formations. On the surface, they just seem useful for moving a force from one place to another. But with a little creativity you can use them in combat. You can rush a group of archers in a tight formation at an enemy group, then at the last second switch to flank formation and split your archers into two groups. Now the enemy's stuck in the middle while you can overlap fields of fire.

UPGRADE → As we've mentioned, upgrading your units is the single best way to increase their production. They'll hit harder, take more damage, and live longer as a result. Archers in particular benefit from the increased range, damage, and accuracy upgrades. Upgrade if there isn't any fighting to do and you have the money to spare. In order for upgrading to pay for itself, you have to build lots of troops, y'know.

UNIQUE UNITS → If you're lucky enough to be the Persians with War Elephants, or the Teutons with the Teutonic knights, build lots of 'em — otherwise, hold off because it's a newbie mistake to make tons of unique units and nothing else. Remeber that unique units have just one specific role at which they excel.

MONKS → They heal your troops and that alone makes them viable, but their main power — conversion — is something so powerful it's potentially unbalancing. But there are ways to counter monks — archers and the Faith technology, for example. Look for slow units like elephants and infantry to convert, and if it gets too close, use another monk to help things along. A group of monks can raise an army from an attacking force if given enough time. They can also convert ships.

SHIPS → They float, they shoot. Ships are usually an all-or-nothing thing — you either build a large navy or just a couple of galleys. For a small navy, fire ships will get you the most mileage because of their great ship-to-ship firepower. If you want to use ships to help your siege effort, cannon galleons are the ticket. They have range almost equal to a trebuchet and do almost as much damage.

SIEGE → Here are the big guns. Catapults, battering rams, scorpions, and the trebuchet. With everything else equal, the player more skilled at using siege weapons will win. Since their fire rate is so slow, timing and position is paramount. Use them to establish a psychological edge, keep a steady pressure with siege and you'll see them uproot for greener pastures where their neighbors aren't constantly throwing rocks at them. Wouldn't you?

Just a few battering rams backed up by some troops can put a serious hurt on a defensive infrastructure. Mangonels and their big brother onagers are perfect for killing massed infantry. And the scorpion is good for big slow moving targets like ships. They take preparation, though, so before you throw lots of money at the siege factory, practice.

KICK ASS

Three sure-fire, 100% guaranteed ways to take out some schmuck on the Zone !

ATTACK CASTLE

WHAT IS IT? → Build a castle right next to the enemy base, where you can load it up with 20 archers and take out any attack as well as cutting off supply lines. It also creates a protected trebuchet factory right outside the enemy's base — deadly, evil, and brilliant

HOW DO YOU DO IT? → Send tons of workers (to build faster) and enough initial units to hold off attack until it is built. Once castle is built garrison remaining units in castle and fill up the rest with elite archers. Now watch and laugh as the castle destroys any and everything that gets near it. Now start cranking out trebuchets and light up their town

VARIATIONS → Supply Castle or Trade Route Castle — cut off supply lines or own any territory you really want by putting a castle down. Quite effective for offense and defense

ARCHER RUSH

WHAT IS IT? → An early archery rush that decimates the economy of an enemy and seriously slows down any building. If followed up with a mini-siege attack could finish them off early on

HOW DO YOU DO IT? → Build an archery asap and start cranking out units. Before anyone gets to the castle age (a.k.a. the age of good defense) send archers into an enemy town and wipe out as many villagers as possible. If they have a sizeable amount of troops (which isn't very likely this early) then attack on the fringes and use the range of the archers (and formations) to wipe out villagers and infantry one area at a time

VARIATIONS → Infantry Rush, Villager Rush — The villager rush is more comical than effective, but it may actually work against a stupid opponent. And it will no doubt be a surprise

GALLEY/GALLEON RUSH

WHAT IS IT? → A naval attack on seaside bases that can completely wipe them out since ship defenses (bombard towers) can't be built until much later in the game (if at all, for some races)

HOW DO YOU DO IT? → Build an army of galleys (only if you know the enemy bases are near waterways — don't be stupid) and attack en masse the unsuspecting villages. Set rally point for production of galleys to the attack area and upgrade to Galleons as soon as you can. If nothing else it will pester the hell out of them while you continue to stock up resources back home. Blacksmith research and University research will make this a much more vicious attack

In real life, Lara Croft would beat the living !@#?% out of you for looking at her like that.



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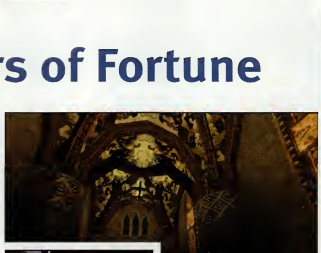
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Y2K: WHO DO YOU HAVE TO KILL TO SURVIVE?
SOLDIER OF X-TRA
UNIVERSAL SOLDIER
BITES THE BULLET
WANTED:
ASSASSIN WHO CARES MORE ABOUT MONEY THAN MORAL DILEMMAS
PROFESSIONAL KILLERS GO HEAD TO HEAD:
MERCENARY VS. GREEN BERET

Real Soldiers of Fortune

Activision's ultra-violent mercenary game has piqued interest for its visual splendor and incredibly violent detail. Developers Raven Software employed the assistance of John Mullins, retired Green Beret (and former "consultant" to several government defense agencies, and private contractors). We quizzed the expert about his background, and found out just how real the *Soldier of Fortune* will be.





PLEASE GIVE US SOME BACKGROUND ON YOUR MILITARY AND "CONSULTING" CAREER.

JOHN MULLINS: 22 years in the U.S. Army Special Forces (Green Berets). Started as a medic, did first tour in Vietnam in '63, got commissioned; second tour in 1966-67 as an "A" team XO and later commander; third tour in 1968-70 in Studies and Observations Group (SOG) and later as a Provincial Reconnaissance Unit advisor for the Phoenix Program. '70s were spent in Europe, Middle East, South and Central America. Retired in '82 with the rank of Major. Went to work for a government agency, returning to the Middle East for three years, then the U.S. State Department's Anti-terrorism Assistance Program. Went into private practice in '87.



DO YOU ENGAGE IN GOVERNMENT WORK OR WORK FOR PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS?

JM: After '87, I worked both for the government on specific contracts, and for private companies and individuals. Lots of dignitary protection work, various investigations, security surveys, training, and the occasional operational mission. Ended up in the Gulf War, working for another government agency. Early '90s were spent doing counter-narcotics work.

WHAT ELEMENTS OF YOUR EXPERTISE HAVE THE GAME DESIGNERS CALLED UPON MOST?

JM: Weaponry, i.e., weapons that would be used on such missions, ranges, capabilities, capacities. Tactics. The sounds of combat.

IS *THE WILD GEESE* THE BEST MERCENARY ... SORRY, "CONSULTANT" ... MOVIE EVER?

JM: *The Wild Geese* is certainly one of my favorites, and is relatively authentic, given the constraints of filmmaking. The best combat movie is Australian, *The Odd Angry Shot*. And one of the best recreations of the confusion, madness, and surprise that is the result of getting shot, is *Forrest Gump*, when his platoon comes under fire. ▶ p. 107

THE POWER METER

It's a jungle out there in the land of games. Be on the lookout for these usual suspects.

THIS MONTH	LAST MONTH	
1	4	**ACTIVISION** —› *Soldier of Fortune* leads the charge of realistic shooters in potentially the most brutally realistic game of the year.
2	-	**SIERRA** —› With *Team Fortress 2* being pushed back to some time in 2002 (or thereabouts), and despite the "restructuring," *SWAT3* remains a beacon on a dark landscape.
3	-	**RED STORM** —› *Rogue Spear* is sitting pretty in the charts (along with *Rainbow Six*), while turn-based strategy RPG *Shadow Watch* has a fascinating premise.
4	-	**TALONSOFT** —› Flush with lots of cash from the Take Two buyout, *Hidden and Dangerous* is just the start of their real-world action gaming focus.
5	5	**WESTWOOD** —› So *TS* has its problems. It's still selling loads. But attention will now turn to *Renegade*, the third-person action game set in the *C&C* universe.
6	8	**BUNGIE** —› Kicking ass in epic confrontations has been a hallmark of Bungie's games, and that's not going to change much with *Oni* and the awe-inspiring *Halo*.
7	-	**EPIC GAMES** —› So the sci-fi weapons and manic speed in *Unreal Tournament* aren't realistic in the *AS* sense, but the *Saving Private Ryan*-style level design gives it great focus.
8	7	**INTERPLAY** —› *Messiah*'s so close, and the BioWare AD&D licenses keep selling like mad.
9	2	**MICROSOFT** —› *AOE2* will sell more than the original, and still they have an impressive line-up for early 2000, with plenty of Digital Anvil titles, *Motocross Madness 2*, and Chris Taylor's new game.
10	10	**BLIZZARD** —› A perennial entry. *Diablo 2*. *WarCraft III*. 'Nuff said.

OTHER CONTENDERS

CODEMASTERS —› Having bought up Yosemite headquarters, and reunited many of the original *Novy SEALS* team, it's great to hear that this *Unreal* engine project is back on track.

ROMWERE IN SIGHT

ACCLAIM —› After shipping *Shadow Man*, *Trickstyle*, and *Re-Volt*, it's all quiet on the Acclaim front, with nothing revealed about any 2000 products on the PC.

FANTASY FRAG

UNIVERSAL SOLDIER: AGAIN?



WHY WE HATE IT —› *The Return*? We hate this mainly because it stars the quickly drying-up Jean-Claude Van Damme. Ok, maybe 15 years ago, this guy kicked ass. Even in 1992, when the first *Universal Soldier* came out, "JCVD" (sounds like a disease doesn't it?) was still pretty much on top of his game and could occasionally transcend the mediocre-at-best scripts and embarrassingly bad "love scenes." But seven years, umpteen pitiful *Soldier of Fortune* knock-offs (Anyone remember *Legionnoire*? How 'bout *Maximum Risk*?), a bit too much plastic surgery, and a lot of gray hair later ... homeboy's looking a little rough around the edges and needs to move on. What's next? *Universal Soldier Conquers the Retirement Community*?

HOW IT SHOULD BE FRAGGED —› It's no coincidence that the movie's "plug line" was "Prepare to Become Obsolete." JCVD (along with anyone else involved with this blatant attempt to suck dry an already tired license) should be forced to watch *The Color Purple*, *Steel Magnolias*, and *Terms of Endearment* until he admits that these days, without the help of a good film editor, '80s chick flick stars Oprah, Dolly Parton, and Shirley Maclaine could kick *his* ass.

Every weekday on our website, we frag whatever the heck mak. s us angry, and occasionally we frag something just because it needs it. Find out what we fragged today on www.pcaf.com. You'll come for the frags, but you'll stay for the CRAZY NEWS AND BABES.

Dick Meadows is the only Green Beret with his own statue at Fort Bragg







WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE WEAPON?
JM: Favorite rifle/carbine over the years has been the Colt Commando, now the M-4 carbine. Shoots a 5.56mm round at 3250 feet per second. Light, easily maneuverable. Favorite pistol used to be the Browning Hi-Power in 9mm. Replaced by the Czech CZ-75 when they became available. Right now my preferred carry gun is a Sig-Sauer P-229 in .357 Sig.

ARE YOU HAPPY THAT *SOF* WILL ONLY BE PLAYED BY MATURE AUDIENCES?
JM: I think that the blood and gore might be a little much for some tender eyes, but frankly think it's worse when dying simply becomes something clean and beautiful and non-permanent. Wonder how many people would be so ready to pick up a gun if they were subjected to the actual photos of someone who has been shot to death.

DOES BEING A "CONSULTANT" HELP YOU SCORE WITH THE LADIES?
JM: Married for 37 years to the same woman. How would I know?

SO, YOU'RE FACING PAMELA ANDERSON. SHE'S GOT A BIG-ASS GUN AND SHE'S LOOKING PISSED. WHAT'S YOUR MOVE?
JM: How close is she? Within arm's length, I'm going to own that gun. Farther away, move. Fast, unpredictably, continuously. Despite her expertise on TV, I doubt her ability to take on a moving target.

WHO'S THE BRAVEST PERSON YOU'VE EVER ENCOUNTERED?
JM: Certainly Bob Howard, the most highly decorated soldier to come out of the Vietnam War, would be at the top of the list. As would Dick Meadows, who led missions into North Vietnam, led the assault element in the Son Tay Raid, and was on the ground in Tehran organizing the transportation and logistics for the rescue of the hostages, etc.

WHAT DOES A RETIRED MILITARY "CONSULTANT" DO WHEN HE'S NOT "CONSULTING" FOR GAMES LIKE *SOF*?
JM: Farm. Hunt. Raise grandkids. Fish. Ranch. Train police officers and military operations personnel in advanced tactics. Take the occasional consulting job.

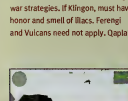
GAMESCAN HOTLIST

DEVELOPERS ARE ALWAYS ON THE LOOKOUT FOR DESIGNERS, PROGRAMMERS, MODELERS (MMM ... MODELS), AND MARKETERS TO WORK ON THEIR GAMES. *SOLDIER OF XTRA* HAS TAKEN OUT CLASSIFIED ADS FOR GAMES CURRENTLY IN DEVELOPMENT OR JUST RELEASED.



STAR TREK DS9: DOMINION WARS

DEVELOPER → Gizmo Games
PUBLISHER → Simon & Schuster Interactive
RELEASE DATE → Q4 2000
TACTICAL → Based on DS9's last couple of seasons, *Dominion Wars* is a *Homeworld*-style 3D tactical space combat game where you play as either the Federation or Dominion for control of the Alpha Quadrant. Command your favorite characters in strategic battles mentioned on the series, but never before seen.
THE AD → Wanted: Crazy loner with an interest in deep space, old TV shows, and technobabble to design war strategies. If Klingon, must have honor and smell of lilacs. Ferengi and Vulcans need not apply. Qapla!



AQUARIUS

DEVELOPER → Jack In The Box
PUBLISHER → TBA
RELEASE DATE → Q4 2000
TACTICAL → After generations of neglect, the Earth becomes an unlivable wasteland. Migrating to a new, habitable planet, humankind finds it is not alone when other aliens decide to take it for themselves. Save humanity in this 3D strategy game played in either a first-person or third-person perspective.
THE AD → Adventurous sort needed to blast into space and find out what's out there. Travel the galaxy, meet exotic alien races, and then kill them. Mapping skills required. No calls, please.

KILLER FOR HIRE OF THE MONTH

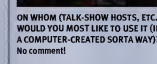
OUR GAME'S CONSULTANT CAN KICK YOUR GAME'S CONSULTANT'S ASS

DEVELOPERS ZOMBIE HIRED THEIR OWN GREEN BERET, RON HASKINS, FOR *SPEC OPS 2*.

A BIT OF BACKGROUND ON YOUR MILITARY AND "CONSULTING" CAREER?
Eight years with the U.S. Army Special Forces aka "Green Berets." Active in the Special Forces community and dabble in military consulting and technical advisory for media events.

THOUGHTS ON *SPEC OPS GREEN BERETS* IN TERMS OF REALISM ...
Nothing comes close to doing the real thing. But as far as computer gaming is concerned, *Spec Ops II* does possess elements of realism. The characters' movement comes across real, as do the weapon's feel and the terrain. One thing I'd like to see in tactical sims are intangibles, especially in the AI. It be pretty intense if a AI baddie unexpectedly popped a grenade and tossed it in the hallway where you happen to be waiting.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE WEAPON?
For CQB it's gotta be the H&K MP5SD. For everything else it's the M16 with M203mm grenade launcher.



ON WHOM (TALK-SHOW HOSTS, ETC.) WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO USE IT (IN A COMPUTER-CREATED SORTA WAY)?
No comment!

DOES YOUR MILITARY EXPERIENCE HELP YOU SCORE WITH THE LADIES?
My wife wouldn't like me answering this. But it does have its perks.

YOU'RE FACING PAMELA ANDERSON. SHE'S GOT A BIG-ASS GUN. WHAT'S YOUR MOVE?
Throw myself at her feet, beg for mercy.

HOW "HARD" ARE THE GREEN BERETS? WHAT WOULD YOU COMPARE THEM TO?
Army Special Forces soldiers are considered elite commandos. However, even though SF teams can perform Direct Action or Counter-Terrorist operations, they like to think of themselves as "teachers." Special Forces mainly conduct Foreign Internal Defense or Guerrilla Warfare operations behind enemy lines, and train indigenous forces in warfare. You won't see SF in many headlines, because they prefer remaining low-key. The US Navy SEALS, US Army SFOD Delta, US Marine Force Recon, Canadian SSF, and French Foreign Legion's 2nd REP are comparable to US Army Special Forces.

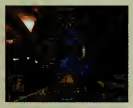
WHO'S THE BRAVEST PERSON YOU'VE EVER ENCOUNTERED?
My 4 year old daughter. She was diagnosed with Type I Diabetes when she was only 13 months old and has lived with four painful shots and five blood tests everyday for the last three years.

WHAT'S YOUR TAKE ON "FREE-LANCERS," "CONSULTANTS," OR OTHER TERMS FOR MERCENARIES?
War has been with mankind since the beginning of our existence. Until we change the very essence of human nature, war will likely remain. Somebody has to fight those dirty little wars.



EVIL DEAD: ASHES 2 ASHES

DEVELOPER → Heavy Iron Studios
PUBLISHER → THQ
RELEASE DATE → Q4 2000
TACTICAL → A single-player real-time 3D adventure game based on the cult movie series. Ash (voiced by Bruce Campbell, of course) returns to the cabin where it all began to go mano a mano with the *Necromonicon ex Mortis* (Book of the Dead). Expect loads of the same black humor that made the last two films such fan favorites.
THE AD → Need buzz-cut psycho to write quirky one-liners like "Good ... bad ... I'm the guy with the gun." Infiltrating 3D Realms to steal back lines they stole for *Duke Nukem 3D* a must. Don't worry about finding us ... we'll find you.



STARLANCER

DEVELOPER → Digital Anvil
PUBLISHER → Microsoft
RELEASE DATE → March 2000
TACTICAL → Those waiting for the next *Wing Commander* won't be disappointed. It's not an official sequel (Origin owns the rights), but Erin Roberts (Chris' brother) is leading the project and, as they say, if it looks like a duck, quacks, etc. 3D space shootin' between the goody Western Alliance and evil Eastern Coalition and cinemas created by the same folks who did *Wing Commander: The Movie*.
THE AD → Voice actors wanted to portray really ugly, nasty Russian guys. Ability to alternately sound sinister and goofy required. (Sean Connery — you can't do accents. Don't bother.) If interested, call and leave your best Boris Badenov impression on our voice mail.

THE WOMEN WE LOVE TO PLAY

JULIE STRAIN



The all-too-hard-to-find babe that is actually directly tied to a game ... To quote military strategist Hannibal Smith, "I love it when a plan comes together." This high-haired, high-heeled vixen is the flesh-like (we can't be sure if she is ALL flesh) inspiration for the lead character in *Heavy Metal: FAKK 2*. You may know Miss Strain from her less-clothed appearance in *Penthouse* or her many soft-porn flicks, but now you get to control a digital version. And judging from our brief encounter with Miss Strain at the photo shoot, controlling this wild woman is something no one could ever do in real life.

ROCKER CHIX

The big hair, the gravelly voice, the ability to drink tequila shots from their cleavage. No party is complete without a rocker chick and we've compiled a "Who's Who" list to invite to your next party



HEATHER LOCKLEAR
ROCKER CHIX CRED → Married Tommy Lee of large genitalia and Motley Crüe fame. Currently married to Richie Sambora of Bon Jovi
WHAT SHE BRINGS TO THE PARTY → She IS the party



LITA FORD
ROCKER CHIX CRED → Leather pants, big hair, and on-stage gyrations when she sings, "Kiss Me Deadly"
WHAT SHE BRINGS TO THE PARTY → Not much class, but plenty of crass and a whole lotta ass



SAMANTHA FOX
ROCKER CHIX CRED → Feathered hair, gigantic ta-tas, perfect name, and a decidedly slutty look
WHAT SHE BRINGS TO THE PARTY → Leather outfits made for someone half her size (So there is leather attire for midgets? Eew!)



CARMEN ELEKTRA
ROCKER CHIX CRED → Vegas wedding to Dennis Rodman, sexual escapades with The Artist, and MTV pin-up girl
WHAT SHE BRINGS TO THE PARTY → A body that never ends and burning desire to show as much of it as possible at all times

RandomPatchGenerator

The patch, once a brilliant invention to further improve games, has now become a sad apology for shoddy programming and premature releases. Developers believe it is the computer game industry version of "Just kidding — as long as we patch our crap game they paid $50 for no one will mind." You know what, we mind! Below is a typical example of games that are released with some "minor" issues.

Ships Alive! Patch Release 1.1.txt - Notepad

File Edit Search Help

Patch 1.1 should be used for Ships Alive! Roman language versions include U.S., Canadian, Hawaiian, German, French, British, Dutch, Belgian, Luxembourgian, Ethiopian, Zimbabwean, Guatemalan, Elven, Castillian, Latin American, Ukranian, Ancient Hebrew, Puerto Rican, Peruvian, Creole, Aramaic, Western Hemispherian, Brazilian, Portuguese, Cantonese, Texan, Ecuadorian, Chinese, Pokémonese, Hobbitese, and Italian.

PLEASE NOTE: Patch 1.0 (which we posted on 9/20/99) unfortunately has some problems. So if you downloaded that Patch, we *highly recommend* that you download Patch 1.1. If you haven't downloaded a Patch yet, this is the one you want! Patch 1.1 will modify several minor issues in *Ships Alive!* that we somehow overlooked (and we apologize, although it wasn't our fault), improving on what we think is an already outstanding game.
NOTE: YOU CANNOT USE PREVIOUS SAVE GAME FILES WITH PATCH 1.1

Here are the items that the new patch version corrects
-Ships no longer appear full when actually completely empty
-Collision detection added to ships. However, when ships crash, so does game.
-Landing at a beach no longer causes your ship to be teleported to Skokie, Illinois
-Marines no longer emerge from a different building than the one they entered
-Crash bug when attempting to change screen resolution has been fixed (S3 cards only)
-Infinite dialogue loop with Queen of Spain has been fixed
-You now receive the correct infamy when using cannons to kill people and when killing crew after raising the Jolly Roger, as per manual
-Setting computer clock to January 1, 2000, no longer causes game to crash
-Firing cannons no longer causes game to crash
-Continuous "Blue Screen of Death" loop has been removed
-Clicking on "Hector the Friendly Dolphin" no longer administers electric shock through keyboard
-Added support for LogicLab's Oarman Force Feedback Rowing peripheral

Remaining Issues:
1. Winning a multiplayer game will crash the user out of the game.
2. Allied players in multiplayer games receive no benefit; their men will treat each other as bitter enemies.
3. The "Pause" feature in multiplayer will crash the user out of the game.
4. The sword mouse cursor in the 3D world while running Software or D3D may become stuck in the upper left corner of the screen. However, a functional arrow mouse cursor can be seen and used.
5. Using the arrow mouse cursor may cause the game to crash. However, a functional sword mouse cursor can be seen and used.
6. The "Quit Game" option will cause your computer to explode, injuring and possibly killing user. It is recommended that you carefully unplug your PC and back away slowly or play Ships Alive! indefinitely.
7. In later stages of the game, saved game file size can reach over 100MB.Please make sure you have 200MB+ of free hard drive space. Not doing so will cause the game to crash.
8. Matrox G400 users, please use (months old) version months old 5.11 drivers. Not doing so will cause the game to crash and delete itself from hard drive.
9. Attempting to uninstall the game will delete your entire hard drive.
10. Attempting to uninstall the game by dragging entire game directory to recycle bin will cause user's computer to achieve limited self-awareness and plot user's demise. Also, it will delete hard drive.
11. There is a known memory leak in the sector seven of nine tertiary adjunct matrix buffer that eats up 5MB of RAM per minute of game time. Until a fix becomes available, upgrade your system to 968MB of RAM for best results.

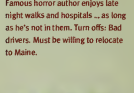
Once again, thank you for your support and we hope you continue to enjoy Ships Alive!
Sincerely,
The *Ships Alive!* team

GAMESCAN



STEPHEN KING'S F-13

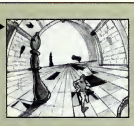
DEVELOPER --› Presto
PUBLISHER --› Blue Byte
RELEASE DATE --› December '99
TACTICAL --› Blue Byte is careful in noting that F-13 is not a game (and even though it sounds like it, not a flight sim), but a desktop companion, complete with a previously unpublished story. While there are three mini-games (like Whack-A-Zombie), the bulk of the product is dedicated to cool, spooky screen-savers and desktop backgrounds. Stephen King wasn't directly involved with the project, but has final approval, so fans should be scared for all the right reasons.
THE AD --› Bodyguard Needed! Famous horror author enjoys late night walks and hospitals ... as long as he's not in them. Turn offs: Bad drivers. Must be willing to relocate to Maine.



LOOSE CANNON

DEVELOPER --› Digital Anvil
PUBLISHER --› Microsoft
RELEASE DATE --› Christmas 2000
TACTICAL --› The second game in our lineup starring a guy named Ash, *Loose Cannon* is set in the near future after the United States suffered an economic collapse. As a bounty hunter, players drive or go on foot to complete missions in this third-person 3D game that looks like a cross between *Driver* and *Metal Gear Solid*.
THE AD --› Real life bounty hunter? Boy, do we need to talk to you! Would like to get details on your life, job, and finding out stuff we couldn't get from watching old reruns of "The Fall Guy."

Most of these "issues" were taken from *Prince Of Persia 3D, Cutthroats,* and *Braveheart*



DRAGON'S LAIR 3D

DEVELOPER → Dragon's Lair LLC
PUBLISHER → Blue Byte
RELEASE DATE → Q1 2001
TACTICAL → Dirk the Daring returns in a remake of the '83 game, but this time in full 3D environments, a third-person perspective, and no "flash and twitch"control scheme. Yet another title that is *Tomb Raider*-ish in approach, the game has the same sort of humor that made the original such a hit, including Dirk's clumsy oaf schtick and character designs by reknowned animator Don Bluth. (You may remember him from the "not quite as good as Disney" animation company behind films such as *All Dogs Go to Heaven.*)
THE AD → Wanted: Cleanup Crew. Big burly types needed to remove tons of old copies of *Dragon's Lair* for the PC CD, Sega CD, LaserDisc, CDi, and any other system that the game was ported over to. Hurry -- they're piling up fast!



TRIBES EXTREME

DEVELOPER → Dynamix
PUBLISHER → Sierra
RELEASE DATE → 2000
TACTICAL → We don't know what Dynamix was smoking to even consider putting the words *Tribes* and "Extreme" on the same box cover. But when it's a sequel to the original *Tribes*, they could call it *Tribes: Roly Poly Fishheads* and we'd still want to play it. More 3D first-person action and multiplayer teamplay.
THE AD → Available now! Anyone with a light armor suit and lots of patience needed to defend base. If you'd rather be repairing turrets and repelling attackers than destroying an enemy base (y'know, the fun stuff), then we'd like to meet you.

PCXL 101 A GUIDE TO ALL THAT IS GEEKY

Ever read something in **PCXL** and wondered what the hell we were talking about? A lot has happened in the past year and a half, so if you're a newcomer, this section is for you. Every in-joke, every stolen reference, all the people who have come and gone ... it's all here. Memorize this list and you'll be the envy of all your friends. (Actually if you're memorizing this dribble, you probably need to work on getting some friends first!)

-alicious → Added to any adjective or noun to accentuate its intrinsic awfulness exponentially. (Eg. Pixelicious, Crapalicious) Interchangable with –erific or –tastic or -tacular.

Ass → (noun) That thing you stare at 90% of the time in third-person adventure games. Also, thing **PCXL** is good at kicking. (adjective) Incredibly lame. (eg. Hall of Ass)

Bea Arthur → Built like a man, made as a woman, pure comedy gold.

Bill Donohue → Lasted only two days on the job after replacing Carrie as Managing Editor.

Breastsessesses → What we live for.

Carrie Shepherd → Former Managing Editor (and dirty little minx) who left **PCXL** to become a superhero ... but instead ended up at another less cool Imagine magazine (and yet another far geekier website).

Cone Of Tragedy → Dan Egger's homemade *Unreal* level too ass (see above) to be believed.

Crack → Nasty drug used to excuse Rob Smith's bad judgement calls. Can be conjugated (crackified, crackalicious) or replaced by "smack."

Crap → What most games tend to be. See "ass." (adjective) Also describes Dan's gaming ability. (And, coincidentally the only swear word Dan's mother allows him to use)

Evercrack → Loving pseudonym for *Everquest*, because of its addictive qualities. Also known as *Eversmack* and *Rat Hunter 3D*.

F—k → Used instead of the more offensive variant (with the u & c) because marketing tests determined that kids are f—king stupid.

Folio Fillers → Hilarious/informative/useless info written sideways on the side of each page. No other magazine does this for its readers. Why? Because they don't care. We do.

Gia DeCarlo → Intern/Lifestyle Editor. Yes, she's a real person. No, she's not appearing naked. Yes, we like to use the same picture of her lying on the floor over and over — yowza!

Girlfriend voice → Whiny, "sensitive guy" voice used when phoning girlfriends/wives from work.

Git → No clue, but according to Rob it's either "jammy" or "bloody."

Glock-glock → Term favored by Ed to show what a street-smart bad-ass he's become ... watching "South Park."

Goofus & Gallant → Based on the *Highlights For Children* characters, G&G teach life do's and don'ts (like Installing 3D cards).

Hall of Ass → The shelf/box/area where **PCXL** stores helnous games.

Hector → **PCXL** mascot/senior editor/coat rack who died tragically in an apparent suicide from too much wine, women, crack, and crow.

Malentine's Day → A holiday for guys that involves beer, electronics, and strip clubs. Should replace or at least compliment the girly Valentine's Day

Mr. T → From the "Mr. T versus ???" websites, we "borrowed" a few catchphrases like "throw 'em helluva far" and "sucka." Influence most often felt in anything written by Ed.

Mirna Blankensteinwhateverhernameis → The Rynn model (from *Drakan*) so dubbed because we honestly forgot what her name was.

Noon → The time that Ed manages to get (oops, make that "got") to work.

Pants → The funniest word in the English language. Replaces any noun for hilarious effect. (eg. "Do or do not, there is no pants.")

Pamela Anderson Lee → Broke our hearts when she took out her implants. In protest we banned her pictures ... for exactly one issue.

Q! → Former **PCXL** Art Director lost behind German lines searching for rest of alphabet.

Rupee → Ex-**PCXL** staffer, monkey, and fatal rickets victim.

Snatch Your Ass Up In A Bear Trap → See "Glock-Glock"

Shotgun → Best weapon to use with quad-damage in *Quake II* or called at lunch for front car seat.

"The Best Looking Game On Two Wheels" (or something similar) → Our most frequently used review tagline ... even if the game has nothing to do with wheels.

Voxels → A surefire way of getting us to make fun of your game.

"You ignorant slut" → Our ... umm ... homage to Dan Akroyd's early (funny) work on "SNL," used in the First Person section of **PCXL**.

Zima → The semi-alcoholic drink of choice for young Dan Egger.

PCXL VS PC GAMER

The yahoos at *PC Gamer* have been smack-talkin' us in their magazine while we've taken the high ground ... until now ...

THE CHARGE → Their big-bellied editor at: more Ultimate Cheeseburgers than our lil, gym-toned Editor in Chief.
VERDICT → Guilty -- *PC Gamer* staffers are a bunch of fat asses. That's one in their favor (we guess).

THE CHARGE → *PC Gamer* gives **PCXL** "daily thrashings" in LAN games.
VERDICT → Not guilty -- Regular **PCXL** victories in *Rainbow Six*, *Re-Volt*, *Quake II*, and *HomeWorld* spark for themselves. As for *Team Fortress* ... we like to be charitable.



Also needed to enjoy **PCXL** → Sense of humor, intelligence, and absolutely no taste

The Heat-O-Meter

THE SOLDIER OF X-TRA EDITION

WHAT'S HOT

NEW YEAR'S EVE --> We're gonna party like it's 1999 ... hopefully because that'll be the last time we ever have to hear that damn song again.

FREE PAGERS --> Rockstar Games has announced that they're giving away a free pager with any of their games as long as the buyer agrees to pay for one year's service. Wait, isn't that really a free game with the purchase of a pager?

GROOVY! --> A game based on the *Evil Dead* movie series is coming courtesy of THQ. Maybe they can steal back the lines that *Duke Nukem* "borrowed" a few years ago.

BABBAGED --> Bookstore mega-chain Barnes and Noble is buying game store/suburban mall fixture Babbages for $215 million dollars. The last time that much money was spent at Barnes and Noble, it was for a Vente Mocha Frappacino at the in-store Starbucks.

WHAT'S COLD

YOU DON'T KNOW JACK --> Paul Ruebens, better known as Pee Wee Herman, will be hosting a TV show based on the video game. From what we hear, he knows a lot of about jack — jacking off, that is.

MATTEL US ABOUT IT --> Mattel's purchase of The Learning Company led to plummeting profits and pissed-off investors. Guess what they learned?

MAC-LIFE --> The Mac version of *Half-Life* was cancelled shortly before its planned release date. The developers say they couldn't get the multiplayer code working right ... because they couldn't find anybody else willing to play *Half-Life* on a Mac.

3DFX CEO OUT --> 3Dfx's CEO Greg Ballard resigned suddenly in October. But, on the bright side, he did it in glorious 32-bit color.



GAME KILLER

BRAVEHEART'S LAST STAND

Hear ye, hear ye! The accused has been charged with the crime of extreme ass, herein consisting of, but not limited to, festering bugs, unplayability, and a proclivity towards glorifying Scots.

Henceforth, and with much aforewith and folderol, the honorable King **PCXL** doth condemn such wretched game to slow torture, and if thee possible, a gruesome death most rank and foul.

Therefore, we decree that *Braveheart* be stretched on ye olde rack until torn and withered, its entrails brutally disemboweled with a dull, rusty spork upon which much filth and KFC Original Recipe grease has congealed, and, finally, drawn and quartered into shreds of despicable ass-ness.

Developers and publishers across the land are to be hand-delivered *Braveheart*'s putrid remains as a reminder to others who dare release games before truly ready to be exalted on the throngs ... or games based on Mel Gibson movies.



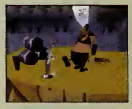
"... its entrails brutally disemboweled with a dull, rusty spork ..."

NOW PLAYING

HERE'S SOME NEW TITLES THAT WEREN'T FIT FOR OUR REVIEWS SECTION.



HOT WHEELS CRASH!
DEVELOPER --> Prolific
PUBLISHER --> Mattel Media
RELEASE DATE --> Now
TACTICAL --> For kids who want to crash their Hot Wheels cars so hard that they explode into flames, burning the flesh from their young, naïve bodies, Mattel has the game for you. Set up crashes with 12 different vehicles in 14 different environments. Includes 25 levels with additional ones available on the Internet. Even includes a real Hot Wheels car right in the box.
THE AD --> Stunt driver needed for product demo. Must be willing to die a burning, painful death while introducing members of the media to an exciting new action game aimed at the youth market. Payment made after work completed.



BUGS BUNNY: LOST IN TIME
DEVELOPER --> B'helvja(!)
PUBLISHER --> Infogrames
RELEASE DATE --> Now
TACTICAL --> Bugs Bunny hops around rich 3D environments, like a furry, long-eared Lara Croft collecting carrots and other power-ups in an effort to get back to his own time by exploring five different eras. Besides Bugs, it includes other popular characters like Elmer Fudd, Witch Hazel, and Marvin The Martian. Poor control will leave you asking "What's up, Doc?"
THE AD --> Tracker wanted! Wild rabbits, ducks, Tazmanian devils and other pests running rampant in our office, spreading their feces and eating our food. Will gladly pay for extermination services. Crossdressing and opera skills optional.



STAR TREK
NEXT GENERATION:
THE COMPANION

DEVELOPER → Imergy

PUBLISHER → Simon & Schuster Interactive

RELEASE DATE → Now

TACTICAL → This isn't a game, but for Star Trek collectors it could be even better. The Companion is a series guide and script library, including each and every episode from all seven seasons of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. What you see is what you get however, so don't expect any extra bells and whistles. Not interested in watching TV trailers or reading scripts? You best move along then ...

THE AD → Security officer needed. In fact, we could use a whole mess of 'em. We provide uniform (red shirt), all the replicated food you can eat, and a very generous life insurance policy. Can't aim? You're hired!



STAR TREK
DEEP SPACE 9:
THE COMPANION

DEVELOPER → Imergy

PUBLISHER → Simon & Schuster Interactive

RELEASE DATE → Now

TACTICAL → As you can probably guess, this is exactly like the *ST: TNG Companion* except it's *Deep Space Nine*. All the scripts and original TV trailers are available on one handy CD-ROM. An automatic script printing function and full episode summaries round out the package.

THE AD → Unemployed actor seeks work. Has played same character for past 12 years and forgotten what it's like to play roles that don't require a rubber prosthesis. If you are a space "voyager" show looking for a new castmember, give me a call.

PCXL CLASSIFIEDS

What the game industry SHOULD be looking for

MAKE BLAIR WITCH A TERMINAL REALITY
Seeking three programmers who can program jerky, vomit-inducing code on a computer that cost more than the *Blair Witch* movie costed to film. Those selected will go into the woods for 90 days with no scripts, textures, or AI, and create the first improvisational computer/horror game. Qualified candidates should be accomplished actors with little or no idea how to program a game. Please send an 8X10 glossy photo to GOD if you are interested.

CODE BLOATER

Can you write clumsy code that takes up at least 10 times the space it should? Ever thought of ways to make word processors harder to use? Have a bad habit of writing buggy code? Think planned obsolescence is really, really cool? Then you are just the man (or woman) we are looking for. Incredibly fast machines with giant hard drives must be made obsolete or no one will ever upgrade again! Send samples of shoddy work to The Microsoft Corporation, Wintel Monopoly Division.

CATCH-PHRASE ARTISTS

Major U.S. publisher has run out of snappy catch-phrases for game boxes. Looking for lines like "The Buck Stops Here" (on our latest deer hunting title). The last writer was fired for being too creative with his clichés. His proposed lines for upcoming games included, "Don't Get Madden, Get Even," "Alice in Cyberland," and "Get Going to Deermanda." If you can do better than that, and enjoy turning last year's games bullet points into "in your face" regurgitations for current incarnations, then we've got a job for you. Send samples of your work to Electronic Arts.

ASS KISSER NEEDED!

As a quickly growing, disreputable PC magazine with the uncommon habit of telling the truth — no matter who it pisses off — we need a schmoozer type to smooth out the rough spots. Interested applicants should be able to lie through their teeth, know nothing about games, love licking marketing guys' asses, and shouldn't have a problem "getting busy" — if you know what we mean. Send suitably butt-kissing letter, number of blue sport coats, and personal hero details to *PC Accelerator*.

THE ARTIST FORMERLY KNOWN AS PRINCE

Once upon a time this MC Hammer pant-wearing hero wowed us all with his agility, animation, and action-packed gameplay. Sadly our hero has gone missing (perhaps kidnapped by the nefarious foes who keep rabbiting his Princess wife), and was replaced by a slow, clunky, Lara Croft-wannabe in polygonal MC Hammer pants. Anyone with information on the whereabouts of our pint-sized hero should contact Red Orb immediately.

WIN A JOB AT ION STORM

We tried begging, we tried pleading and nothing worked. So now see our contest in this month's *PC Gamer*, where you, average Joe Gamer, can win a job at Ion Storm. What we didn't mention in the contest is that the job you win is CEO — hell, no one could do any worse than Todd Porter. Amenities include short hours, plush offices, little to no work, and a chance to "hang" with John Romero. All interested parties should enter the contest, and no, you can't return your prize.

Someone Please Take This Job Already

For the past several hundred years a company called The Collective has been advertising for "talented artists and programmers" to work "in paradise." Despite the promise of a work environment similar to a land of many delights, the positions have gone unfilled, and the ad still tortures us. Have a heart and do us all a favor by taking the damn job already. Anyone who needs work (homeless people, are you reading ... err ... never mind) should go to www.fanonline.com to find the ad. It is there EVERY FRICKING DAY!

LOGICAL THINKERS NEEDED!

For years our company has been known for slick presentation and pretty average sports games, but now that we've finally started adding gameplay, some programmer decided to make our interface completely unusable. We need a qualified candidate to make getting from point A to point B as easy as going from point A to point B. If you understand that last statement then send in a resume on 40 3X5 cards which reference to each other. If we can figure out your resume, then the job is yours. Send all work samples to EA Sports Madden Team.

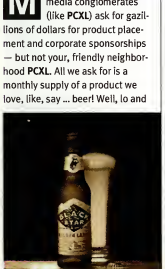
HELP

Please contact GT Interactive (if no one answers the phone then just come down in person and interview yourself)

FREESPONSORSHIPSWELOVE

JUST GOTTA LOVE BEER

Most major international media conglomerates (like **PCXL**) ask for gazillions of dollars for product placement and corporate sponsorships — but not your, friendly neighborhood **PCXL**. All we ask for is a monthly supply of a product we love, like, say ... beer! Well, lo and behold someone finally bit. The fine folks at Black Star Brewing Company have agreed to supply the lushes on the **PCXL** staff with beer every month! In exchange, we promise to drink the icy cold beverage with glee. We also plan to shamelessly plug this relatively unknown brew, not because we got it for free but because it is a damn good beer (and because we got it for free).



What the critics are saying about Black Star ...

"Thish is se besht beer I ever had."
— Mike "Lush" Salmon

"Damn, this shit is bloody good for American piss."
— Rob "Ale" Smith

"Glock, Glock"
— Ed "Bar" Lee

"Once you go Black Star, you never go back!"
— Chuck "Hops" Osborn

"The ultimate beer for gaming ... Whenever the staff drinks it they seem to start playing games and putting off deadlines"
— Philip Mayard

SPECIAL NOTE →
Want your product to be a **PCXL** unofficial sponsor? Send us an e-mail at freestuffwelove@pcxl.com and you too can be shamelessly plugged in these very pages every month (Gaming companies, don't even think about it. We do have some journalistic integrity — not much, but some)

PCXL Reader Makes Good

SEE — NOT ALL OF OUR READERS ARE JOBLESS LOSERS

If you're a director you want the approval of Steven Spielberg. Actors look to Robert DeNiro, mass murderers/psychos to Charles Manson. If you write biting satire (oh, and a gaming magazine) you look for the approval of the people who write "The Simpsons." That is why we were taken aback when Bill Oakley, head writer of "The Simpsons" for six years, sent us an e-mail saying he was a loyal reader and loved our humor. Wow, we've made it. Oakley also sent us a few episodes of his new animated sitcom "Mission Hill." The satire of urban youth aired a couple of times on the WB Friday nights, but because nobody watches the WB (especially on Friday nights) the show was put on hold until sometime in 2000.

The episodes we saw were damn funny and it would be a shame if this show never gets another chance. Because the creators are **PCXL** readers (and damn funny writers, too), your duty is to ensure that when "Mission Hill" returns, it gets the love it deserves. We wouldn't normally suggest turning to the WB (with the notable exception of "Buffy" and "Felicity"), but in this case we must demand that all of you watch this show. We don't know when "Mission Hill" will re-air, but as soon as we find out we'll update our website (www.pcxl.com) so you don't miss it. So, enjoy this mini-interview with one of your fellow readers. If you're a celebrity (or even psuedo-celebrity) who reads **PCXL**, don't be afraid to come out of the closet and let us know at imastarbaby@pcxl.com.





(Top) Some chick refuses to "do the nasty" with our hero. (Bottom) Our hero's dream that night. Again, just like our readers!





These guys really are just like you. They buy beer and look at way too much porno.

NAME ⇢ Bill Oakley

WHAT HE'S DONE ⇢ Writer, producer and head writer of "The Simpsons" for six years. Also wrote for *SPY* magazine and "America's Most Wanted." He also worked at an all-night deli counter for one week in 1987.

THE TRUTH ABOUT CONAN O'BRIEN (WHO USED TO WRITE FOR "THE SIMPSONS," IN CASE YOU DIDN'T KNOW).
Even funnier and kookier in real life. Cracked up "The Simpsons" writers (a tough audience) about 75 times a day for the two years he was there. Famous for hilarious imitation of Ronald Reagan going berserk and throwing acid on the audience at the Republican National Convention.

FAVORITE SIMPSONS MOMENT
Entire episode where Bart fell down the well. Itchy & Scratchy decapitating Hitler in a cartoon from WWII, then FDR kicking his corpse in the butt (doesn't appear in syndicated episodes). "Worker & Parasite." The gay steel mill in "Homer's Phobia."

REAL LIFE "DOH."
Ordered a pizza, smothered it with parmesan cheese, then ate it. Shortly thereafter, realized the "parmesan cheese" had actually been garlic salt. Had awful breath and literally foamed at the mouth for two days.

ANIMATED DAVID SPADE. DISCUSS.
The magic of animation used to distill all the charm of David Spade into a concentrated form. Hooray! (Or, "Mmmm ... Concentrated David Spade juice")

LOYAL PCXL READER SINCE ISSUE NUMBER ... ?
Whatever was out on the stands about 14 months ago. Subscribed minutes after reading the first issue I ever saw.

"MISSION HILL." WHY THE HELL SHOULD WE CARE WHEN IT COMES BACK TO TV (IF IT COMES BACK THAT IS)?
[It's a] funny show where we get to do all sorts of stories we couldn't do on "The Simpsons" because the characters were all little kids or older married people. Stories about dating, sex, high school, computer games, masturbation — everything the **PCXL** audience holds dear.

FAVORITE PCXL ARTICLE (IF THERE IS ONE) AND WHY?
Loved the "Drunk Flying" article. Drunken game playing (one of my favorite pastimes) isn't covered enough in other publications.

FAVORITE PCXL EDITOR NAMED CHUCK?
Is there any choice other than Chuck Osborn?

FAVORITE GAMES:
Interstate '76 (all-time favorite), *Half-Life* (duh), *Tribes*, *Kingpin*.

MOST EMBARRASSING MOMENT (CAREER OR OTHERWISE):
Not really embarrassing, but we did put our office phone number in the background of one "Simpsons" episode to see what would happen and spent the entire night answering hundreds of phone calls from viewers and pretending to be Krusty the Klown.

CAN YOU SURVIVE Y2K?

AS A READER OF PCXL (OR AS SOME MAY CALL YOU, "CULT MEMBER"), IT'S IMPORTANT TO THE FATE OF HUMANITY THAT YOU'RE READY FOR THE CALAMITY COMING ON JANUARY 1, 2000. (IF HOWEVER, YOU ARE READING THIS SOMETIME AFTER JANUARY 1, IT IS LIKELY THAT INTENSE LEVELS OF RADIATION HAVE BURNED OVER 95% OF YOUR BODY, LEAVING YOU A GLOWING, RAVENOUS, CANNIBALISTIC ZOMBIE. YOU CAN STOP READING NOW.) TAKE OUR QUIZ AND TEST YOUR SURVIVAL SKILLS.

1. WHEN STOCKING YOUR BUNKER WITH NECESSITIES, YOU SHOULD BUY:

A. Bottled water
B. Canned food
C. A mail-order bride
D. Back issues Of **PCXL**

Answer: D — The imagine brain-trust foresaw the coming apocalypse and made sure our readers would be well taken care of. Each page of **PCXL** is edible, our printing ink makes thick, rich gravy, and a thin vial of water has been hidden inside the spine.

2. THE GAME THAT WILL BEST PREPARE YOU FOR A BLEAK, LAWLESS FUTURE IS:

A. *Barbie's Bullet-Proof Vest Designer*
B. *Resident Evil 4: Peaceful Coexistence*
C. *Ted Nugent's Gut 'Em And Stuff 'Em*
D. *Quoke III: Arena*

Answer: D — Everybody (except mom) knows that violent games like *Quake III* teach you how to kill ... provided you own a rocket launcher and can reach the quad damage hidden inside the old schoolbook depository.

3. IF YOU'RE STRANDED IN AN UNDERGROUND SHELTER WITH ONLY ONE PERSON, IT SHOULD BE:

A. 
B. 
C. 
D. 

Answer: D — Dead people, no deodorant, and rampant filth added up to bad smells aplenty.

4. WHEN HUNTED BY GIGANTIC, MUTATED MAN-EATING SHREWS (ANIMAL OR STREISAND), YOU SHOULD:

A. Wake up
B. Hit the Escape button over and over
C. Tame them with witty repartee
D. Run like hell

Answer: D — Giant, mutant man-eating shrews eat six tons a day. Don't stick around.

5. HELP! YOU THINK YOU'RE TURNING INTO A ZOMBIE. YOU SHOULD:

A. Ponder which family member is the tastiest
B. Play the game *Flesh Feast*
C. Run as the Democratic candidate for president
D. Get a job at Eidos

Answer: D — Cornbread. Ain't nothin' wrong with that.

6. AS YOUR PLANE PLUMMETS TOWARDS THE GROUND, YOU SHOULD:

A. Duck and cover
B. Cover and duck
C. Use duct tape
D. Scream like a little girl

Answer: B — Inherent lameness will scare you back to mortality because it proves that being a zombie really isn't that much fun.

7. THE POST-APOCALYPTIC FUTURE WILL HAVE:

A. Rich 3D graphics
B. Loads of realtime strategy
C. Bad FMV cutscenes
D. A nasty funk

Answer: D — Almost anything can be done with enough duct tape.

8. YOUR BEST HOPE FOR SURVIVING Y2K WILL BE:

A. 
B. 
C. 
D. 

Answer: D — We can't believe you flipped the magazine over to read this.

9. THE CAUSE OF THE Y2K PROBLEM IS:

A. 
B. 
C. 
D. 

Answer: D — Early programmers were distracted by ... umm ... what were we talking about again?

10. AS A FOLLOWER OF THE PCXL CULT, YOUR JOB WILL BE TO:

A. Buy beer
B. Keep zombies off Mike Salmon
C. Forage for voluptuous, non-zombie women (or even voluptuous zombie women if we get desperate)
D. All of the above

Answer: D — Well, duh ... it's our cult so we can do whatever we want.

BONUS QUESTION:

11. BONUS QUESTIONS ARE, BY DEFINITION ...

A. Lame space killers
B. Not as funny as the real questions
C. Totally unneccessary
D. All of the above

SCORES

10 CORRECT ANSWERS ⇢ We'll meet you at the **PCXL** compound.
7-9 CORRECT ANSWERS ⇢ You may survive ... as a slave to the (still hot), disembodied head of Sandra Bullock.
4-6 CORRECT ANSWERS ⇢ Chances iffy. Better reserve your seat in Hell next to Pauly Shore.
1-3 CORRECT ANSWERS ⇢ Marinate yourself in teriyaki sauce, you're zombie chow.

NOTABLE OFFICE QUOTES

"YOU'D BE GETTING LAID CONSTANTLY IF YOU'D JUST SHUT YOUR MOUTH."
— Julie Strain to Ed Fox at *F.A.K.K.2* Shoot

"I'M DEFINITELY TAKING 'THE WORLD'S LUCKIEST BLACK MAN'"
— Dan Egger talking about his video choice

"DOES SOMEBODY WANNA GIVE ME A LAP DANCE ... "
— Kyle, searching for a photo.

"I'M JUST SAYING, I'M NOT GOING TO WEAR THE DRESS, AGAIN!"
— Mike Salmon with some story about a college party

"THERE ARE A LOT OF *FINE* CHICKS HERE TONIGHT ... YOU MIGHT NOT BE THE FINEST ONE, BUT YOU'RE STILL *FINE*."
— Matt Holmes' horrendous attempt at being charming

FEEDBACK

letters@pcxl.com



Welcome to the year 2000! Of course, nobody is reading this because everyone died due to wacky Y2K mishaps, but the big bosses say we have to answer your letters anyway. This month, we've got discussions on aching toes, subliminal messages, the age old "Is Mike a moron?" debate, and a disturbingly unhealthy obsession with Chuck.

THAT'S JUST WRONG

Dear PCXL,
I want you to know how much I cherish your magazine, and let you know that it kicks the hell out of *PC Gamer*. I was wondering if Chuck was single. If so would he like to go to a Marilyn Manson concert with me? Also, could you put lots of pictures of Chuck in biker shorts in the magazine?
Tekiar Azehel

Please, this is an image none of us really want to think about.



Here's a babe in biker shorts and we think her name is Marilyn. Will that work?

NO CLASS

My classmate had the misfortune of never playing *Dungeon Keeper II*, so I decided to bring in Disc #2 of the November issue for my friend. I go to a Christian high school and any pornographic material is prohibited. When I gave the CD to my friend, the teacher noticed the cover and said it was inappropriate and that she would send the CD to the dean of students. They saw the cover and the main theme on the cover was "100 Megs of Babelicious Cover Babes." They loaded up the CD in one of their computers and "viewed seven or eight out of the 70 or so" pictures. They said the pictures were pornographic (having "inappropriate positions and partial nudity"). I, myself, never loaded up the CD on my computer (since I just got it in the mail the day before) but I trusted you guys in the fact that you wouldn't solicit pornography to people who aren't even old enough to legally buy pornography.

My point of writing this is that you let me down. Granted some people might have wanted these pornographic pictures, but there are other ways of doing this, maybe filter out your members' list of those under 18, or ask them to fill out a card to receive the CD. Or maybe stick to games, keep the mag/CD clean, and keep the pin-up girls in *Playboy* and *Cosmo*.
Thanks,
David Rappo

Your teachers wouldn't know "pornography" if it sat up and spanked them in the ass. Have you ever seen a *Playboy*? How about *Fomily Heat, Barely Legal, High Society, Plug, Swank, Nugget, Hustler*, and *Penthouse*? Now those are pornography. Besides, *Cosmo* is a chick mag, not a skin rag. The pictures on our CD were unused shots of our past cover models, all suitable for a newsstand. Your teachers should see some of the stuff we receive (happily) from our loyal readers.

MERELY A FLESH WOUND

Dear PCXL,
Damn, my toe hurts.
NEE!

We told you not to cut your toenails with a blowtorch, but would you listen? Noooooooo ...

HIDDEN AND DERANGED

I just read this book on subliminal messages (send me porn) and I thought it was good (send me free games). I thought I would report it to a fine perlodical such as yourself (buy me a new computer) which is known for its tasteful and humorous (I kissed ass — do as I say, damn it) articles. I also want to say keep up the good work and may you (do as I say and I will use my powers on supermodels) procrastinate all day and get paid incalculable amounts of money for it. (This is for you Ed: "pants, pants, pants")
Sincerely,
Dmnarf

We love our readers (as long as we don't have to speak to them) and always look for ways to please them (if they are hot young honeys). Therefore we have taken your requests very seriously (like we take anything seriously) and your prizes are on the way (not).

DREAMCRAP

First of all, great mag. However I do have to respond to the 10 things you can do with a Dreamcast (November '99). I enjoy my Dreamcast, and you know what? I can't remember the last time it crashed and I had to reboot the entire system. Also you mention when the graphics start to look old. Mike, you might get a lot of free stuff, but the last time I checked, the price of a new 3D card and more RAM was less than buying a console system. Don't get me wrong, I love my computer but I also love a lot of the games you can only find on a console.
Corey

Hey Smoked Salmon,
I just got done reading my second-hand copy of PCXL, and I can't agree more with your rant on the DC. One of my little brother's spoiled friends bought a new DC with five games as soon as it came out, and now he's already back on his P200 system lagging through *TFC*. The one thing you forgot to mention in reason #1 is the most obvious: How can people forget Sega's Saturn system? Don't stupid console consumers know that previous makers of ass will still put out ass, no matter how they hype it?
John 'Demoman' McEchron

As usual, the reader is always right – as long as they agree with me.
Mike

EB VS BABBAGE'S

Hey PC Accelerator,
I work at a small videogame store called Babbage's (EB's rival), and when it gets really slow, I pull out PCXL. Well, a co-worker of mine saw where you tried to take *Recoil* back to EB (boo) and we saw how bad they treated you. [PCXL PI, November '99] If you came to our store we would have hooked you up with a new one, no problem. We also cut out the *3D Trophy Wife* fake ad, put it in a jewel case, and put it on our shelf. So far we've had three reservations for it, and tons more ask about it.
Charlie Snow

But we didn't want a *new* copy of *Recoil* — we wanted cash! We discovered that EB doesn't accept titles back from certain publishers because those publishers don't want them to resell their games and be deprived of a new sale. And *Trophy Wife 3D*? Developers, we're willing to sell our intellectual property to the highest bidder — again, for cold, hard cash.





letters@pcxl.com

FEEDBACK

THE PERIODIC FABLE

Hey guys,
Just writing to tell you that your mag kicks ass and to tell a story of one of my little PCXL experiences. I had this science project on the periodic table where we had to select 25 elements, write their electron configuration, and cut out pictures from magazines [of things] that contained the element. I was at home and on the last element, silicon. The first thing that popped into my head was computer parts, so I started looking for magazines with computer parts. All of my gaming magazines except PCXL were at my friend's house (I let him borrow them saying he wasn't ready for PCXL). PCXL was the only mag with any computer parts in it, but I wasn't about to cut anything out of it!! The project was two days late, but I would say it's definitely worth it.

Duke

Don't bogie the PCXLs, Duke. Give your friend a free one to get him hooked and he'll be a friend for life. And when you're looking for silicon, we're disappointed that you thought of computer parts. Look a little harder and I'm sure you'll find PCXL has plenty of "other" more pleasing silicon photography.



You'll find plenty of silicon in PCXL — here's an example.

IT'S A GIRL!

Wow! Porn, beer, not to mention insults on every page of my first issue of PCXL! I used to think I was a perverted, antisocial alcoholic ... thanks for making me feel like one of the guys.

Yours truly,
Stacey McInturf

No prob, Stacey. As long as you don't look like one of the guys, you can drop by anytime.

BREAKUP BLUES

Today I broke up with my girlfriend of one year. I was pretty bummed about it until I remembered your magazine. I remembered how cool it was so I drove out and got it. Within an hour I was wetting my pants from laughter. Best thing was in November '99 on page 134. I seriously ran to the bathroom and was laughing so hard the piss went everywhere. You guys are doing a tremendously good job. On a more serious note, I am going off to college and I am at a loss at what I should study. I want to design computer games. Do you know what major that would be? I was looking at Management Information Systems. Well, thanks for all the laughs. You turned a bad day into one of the funniest ever.

Dave Thornblad

First we recommend you work on your bladder control problem. Then study computer science and programming. Don't go into MIS unless you'd like to spend your 40s staring into a mirror asking what the hell you've done with your life.

A STAR OSBORN

Our pal H.E. Pennypacker, the official PCXL songsmith, is back with a ditty about Assistant Editor Chuck Osborn who was chosen for this honor through the process of elimination.

The Chuck Osborn Song
(Sung to the tune of "Bales of Cocaine" by The Reverend Horton Heat)

Well I was surfin' on the Net,
'bout 1998,
Checkin' my email, and prayin' for a date,
When suddenly out of nowhere,
two files, they did appear,
I thought, "Oh me, oh my," and "Man, what have we here?"

So I opened up them files, and man was I surprised.
A *Daikatana* preview, and other games besides.
So I sent Mike S. a sample, and knew it was a hit,
Cuz he read it through, and wrote me back, said "Chuck, man, that's good shit!"

(Chorus)
Previews of games, come from senders with no names.
I dunno who dun sent them, but I thank 'em just the same!

Previews of games, now with pictures of hot dames,
My life's changed completely by them mails with no names.

So I loaded up them files on my portable Dell,
Headed west for San Fran, towards PCXL.
I didn't have a notion if anyone would care,
But a couple issues later, and I'm a millionaire!

(Chorus)
Aw, you're drunk, Salmon!

And now I am a rich man, and I get all games for free,
And I sold my old P2, saved up for an AMD.
But when I get so homesick, I think I'm goin insane,
I write on back to Texas, but I don't sign my name ...

(Chorus)

PEOPLE REALLY DO WIN – JUST NOT YOU!

Each month in **PCXL** we have a ton of contests where we give our readers a chance to win some of the crap we have lying around the office. As proof that we aren't being fraudulent (at least not in the contests), we are going to report back our winners right in this little box. If you didn't win, then keep trying — it is highly unlikely that you'll be a loser your whole life. (Actually, we've just been informed that is highly LIKELY. Sorry.)

In order to win these prizes you have to respond to our email. Currently our two winners have yet to claim their prizes. If you want their prizes just send a letter to letters@pcxl.com explaining why your home would be a better place for our crap, but still loved, games.

FAKE AD OCTOBER

THE AD → Feel & Dream Trophy Wife 3D
WINNER WHERE ARE YOU? We sent you an email and promised a copy of *Recoil* — how come you don't write back? Come home, all is well!

FAKE AD NOVEMBER

THE AD → Rectium: Avenging Proctologist
WINNER WHERE ARE YOU? You said the game is ass — so are our prizes. Claim them before we give them away to someone else in different sizes

SEND US MORE BEER THAN TED CONTEST

WINNER → Nobody has managed to send us more beer than "Crazy Ted"
UPDATE → So far Mark from Gamescon (host of fine LAN tournaments the world over) sent us the same amount (12), and Black Star provided 48 (but was disqualified for being a brewery and not a reader). The contest is still open and our fridge is waiting, so send that beer

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Asus P5A	ALi® Aladdin V	512	384	3		Award			5	2	1	ATX	1 Yr	$97	$147	$161	$185	$209	$207	$257	$292	$342
Asus P5A-B	ALi Aladdin V	512	384	3		Award			5	2	1	Baby AT	1 Yr	$96	$146	$160	$184	$208	$206	$256	$291	$341
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Slot A

Part Number	Chip Set	Maximum Memory (MB)	168-pin DIMM Sockets	Flash BIOS	Bus Frequency	Integrated Controller	PCI Slots	ISA Slots	AGP Slot	Format	Manufacturer's Warranty	Motherboard Only	w/AMD Athlon™ 600MHz	w/AMD Athlon 650MHz	w/AMD Athlon 700MHz	w/AMD Athlon 750MHz
AMD K7M MB3707	AMD-751 / VIA 686A	768	3	Award	100/120/133	UltraDMA/66	5	1	1	ATX	1 Yr	$199	$514	$679	$799	$979	$1179
FIC SD11 ME5401	AMD-751 / VIA 686A	768	3	Award	100/120/133	UltraDMA/66	5	1	1	ATX	1 Yr	$199	$474	$639	$739	$939	$1129
GVC QS750 MB7601	AMD-750	768	3	Award	100	UltraDMA/66	4	3	1	ATX	1 Yr	$143	$458	$623	$743	$923	$1123
Microstar MS-6167 MB7201	AMD-750	768	3	Award	100	UltraDMA/66	5	2	1	ATX	1 Yr	$159	$474	$639	$759	$939	$1139

Socket 370

Part Number	Chip Set	Maximum Memory (MB)	168-pin DIMM Sockets	Flash BIOS	Integrated Audio	Integrated Video	PCI Slots	ISA Slots	AGP Slot	Format	Manufacturer's Warranty	Motherboard Only	w/Intel Celeron™ processor 466MHz	w/Intel Celeron processor 533MHz	w/Intel Celeron processor 566MHz	w/Intel Celeron processor 600MHz	w/Intel Pentium® III processor 450MHz	w/Intel Pentium III processor 500MHz	w/Dual Intel Celeron processor 466MHz	w/Dual Intel Celeron processor 533MHz	w/Dual Intel Pentium III 550E MHz 256K DC
ABIT BM6 MB6004	Intel 440BX	768	3	Award			5	2	1	ATX	1 Yr	$112	$180	$183	$222	$271	$287	$347	N/A	N/A	N/A
ABIT BP6 (Dual) MB5502	Intel 440BX	768	4	Award			5	2	1	ATX	1 Yr	$149	$217	$220	$260	$308	$324	$384	$286	$305	$1019
EPoX EP-3VBA MB9851	VIA Apollo Pro+	768	3	Award	AC-97		4	1	1	ATX	2 Yrs	$85	$153	$166	$196	$244	$370	$420	N/A	N/A	N/A
SuperMicro 370SBA MB5123	Intel 440BX	512	2	AMI			4	3	1	ATX	1 Yr	$111	$179	$182	$212	$261	$276	$336	$245	N/A	N/A
SuperMicro 370SEA MB5140	Intel 810e	512	2	AMI	Intel 810e	Intel 810e	6	1	1	ATX	1 Yr	$143	$211	$224	$254	$302	$428	$478	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tyan S1854 Trinity 400 MB8018	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	768	3	Award			6	1	1	ATX	3 Yrs	$115	$183	$186	$228	$274	$400	$500	N/A	N/A	N/A

Slot 1

Part Number	Chip Set	Maximum Memory (MB)	168-pin DIMM Sockets	Flash BIOS	Integrated Audio	Integrated Controller	PCI Slots	ISA Slots	AGP Slot	Format	Manufacturer's Warranty	Motherboard Only	w/Intel Pentium III 533EB 256K DC 133MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium III 600 512K 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium III 600E 256K DC 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium III 650 512K 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium III 667 256K DC 133MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium III 700 256K DC 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium III 733 256K DC 133MHz FSB	w/Dual Intel Pentium III 550E 256K DC 100MHz FSB
ABIT BE6-II MB9508	Intel 440BX	768	3	Award		UltraDMA/66	5	1	1	ATX	1 Yr	$152	$352	$417	N/A	$582	$877	$817	N/A	$1017	N/A	N/A
ABIT BP6 MB9507	Intel 440BX	768	3	Award			6	1	1	ATX	1 Yr	$122	$322	$387	N/A	$532	$647	$787	N/A	$987	N/A	N/A
ABIT BX6 (2.0) MB8502	Intel 440BX	768	3	Award			5	2	1	ATX	1 Yr	$122	$322	$341	$416	$532	$647	$787	$1006	$987	N/A	N/A
Asus P2B96-S MB8706	Intel 440BX	1024	4	Award			5	2	1	ATX	2 Yrs	$329	$529	$584	N/A	$739	$854	$994	N/A	$1194	N/A	N/A
Asus P2B96-DS MB9707	Intel 440BX	1024	4	Award			4	2	1	ATX	1 Yr	$459	$669	$734	N/A	$879	$994	$1134	N/A	$1334	N/A	$2199
Asus P2B-B MB9714	Intel 440BX	768	3	Award			4	2	1	Baby AT	1 Yr	$127	$327	$342	$417	$537	$652	$792	$1002	$992	N/A	N/A
Asus P3B-F MB6105	Intel 440BX	1024	4	Award			6	1	1	ATX	1 Yr	$144	$344	$409	N/A	$554	$669	$809	N/A	$1009	N/A	N/A
Asus P3B-1394 MB9721	Intel 440BX	512	2	Award	AC-97	UltraDMA/66	3	1	MicroATX	1 Yr	$199	$399	$464	N/A	$639	$724	$864	N/A	$1064	N/A	N/A
EPoX EP-6VBA MB9802	VIA Apollo Pro +	768	3	Award	AC-97	UltraDMA/66	4	2	1	ATX	2 Yrs	$89	$289	$354	N/A	$489	$604	$744	N/A	$954	N/A	N/A
FIC KA11 MB9411	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	1024	4	Award		UltraDMA/66	5	2	1	ATX	1 Yr	$109	$309	$374	N/A	$519	$634	$774	N/A	$974	N/A	N/A
Intel L440GX+ MB9617	Intel 440GX	2048	4	AMI	Intel/Pharma	Adaptec 2-Ch U2W	5	1	1	ATX	3 Yrs	$179	$379	$444	$519	$569	$1044	$1184	N/A	$1384	N/A	$2249
SuperMicro P3TSCA MB8161	Intel 820	1024	2	AMI	AC-97	UltraDMA/66	5	1	ATX	1 Yr	$144	$344	$409	$479	$554	$669	$809	$834	$1009	$1034	N/A
SuperMicro P3TSED MB8162	Intel 810e	512	2	AMI	AC-97	UltraDMA/66	6	1	ATX	1 Yr	$129	$329	$394	$464	$539	$654	$794	$819	$994	$1019	N/A
SuperMicro P3TDME MB8151	Intel 840	4096	6	AMI	AC-97	Intel 6702100-1	6	1	ATX	1 Yr	$329	Call	Call	Call	Call	Call	Call	Call	$1219	Call	$1219	Call
SuperMicro P6DGH MB9102	Intel 440GX	2048	4	AMI		Adaptec 2-Ch U2W	9	2	1	Full AT	1 Yr	$799	$999	$1064	N/A	$1209	$1324	$1464	N/A	$1664	N/A	$2529
SuperMicro P6DGU MB9122	Intel 440GX	2048	4	AMI		Adaptec U2W	5	2	1	ATX	1 Yr	$459	$659	$724	N/A	$889	$964	$1124	N/A	$1324	N/A	$2189
SuperMicro P6SBA MB9120	Intel 440BX	1024	4	AMI			4	3	1	ATX	1 Yr	$129	$329	$394	N/A	$554	$754	$894	N/A	$994	N/A	N/A
SuperMicro P6SBU MB9121	Intel 440BX	1024	4	AMI		Adaptec U2W	4	3	1	ATX	1 Yr	$329	$529	$594	N/A	$739	$854	$994	N/A	$1194	N/A	N/A
Tyan S1657 Trinity 371 MB8017	Intel 440BX	768	3	AMI			6	1	1	ATX	3 Yrs	$109	$309	$374	N/A	$519	$634	$774	N/A	$974	N/A	N/A
Tyan S1854 Trinity 400 MB8018	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	768	3	Award		UltraDMA/66	6	1	1	ATX	3 Yrs	$119	$319	$384	N/A	$529	$644	$784	N/A	$984	N/A	N/A

Slot 2

Part Number	Chip Set	Maximum Memory (MB)	168-pin DIMM Sockets	Flash BIOS	Integrated Audio	Integrated Video	Integrated Controller	PCI Slots	ISA Slots	AGP Slot	Format	Manufacturer's Warranty	Motherboard Only	w/Intel Pentium III 550E 256K DC 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium III 600E 256K DC 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Pentium III Xeon processor 550MHz 256K	w/Intel Pentium III Xeon 550MHz 512K	w/Dual Intel Pentium III Xeon 550MHz 256K	w/Dual Intel Pentium III Xeon 550MHz 512K	w/Quad Intel Pentium III Xeon 550MHz 256K	w/Quad Intel Pentium III Xeon 550MHz 512K	w/Quad Intel Pentium III Xeon 550MHz 1024K
AMI MegaPlex II MB6215	Intel 450NX	4096	8	AMI			2MB ATI	7	1		6U Rack	1 Yr	$5995	$6095	$6525	N/A	$6895	$7875	$9395	$10815	$11315
AMI MegaPlex II MB9216	Intel 450NX	2048	8	AMI			2MB ATI	7	1		4U Rack	1 Yr	$3649	$4749	$5979	$7989	$5849	$8329	$13239	$8249	$12969	$21009
Asus XG-DLS MB9713	Intel 440GX	2048	4	AMI			Adaptec 2-Ch U2W	Intel PRO/100+	5	1	1	ATX	1 Yr	$779	$1879	$1099	$1119	$2979	$6439	$9459	N/A	N/A
SuperMicro S2DM3 MB6130	Intel 440GX	4096	8	AMI	AC-97		Adaptec Dual 2-Ch U160m	Intel PRO/100+	8	1		ATX	1 Yr	Call	Call	Call	Call	Call	Call	Call	Call	Call
SuperMicro S2DG2 MB6136	Intel 440GX	2048	4	AMI			Adaptec 2-Ch U2W		5	2	1	ATX	1 Yr	$549	$1649	$2879	$4899	$2749	$5219	$9229	N/A	N/A
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Tyan S1592D Thunder X MB6012	Intel 440GX	2048	4	AMI			Adaptec 2-Ch U2W		6	1		Mod. ATX	1 Yr	$579	$1679	$2909	$4913	$2779	$5239	$9259	N/A	N/A

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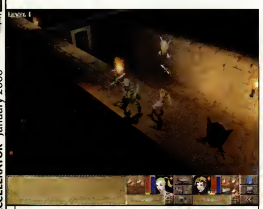
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Are Games Too Damn Serious?

Look at the PC game titles on the shelves of your typical software store. It's like the song titles of a Scandinavian death metal band. It's "Dark this," "Doom that," "Soul the other." On one hand it says that most PC game developers come from a certain homogenous segment of the socio-economic ladder (suburban white) and thus tend to like the same things: Sci-fi, fantasy, things getting blow'd up. They've got serious and/or dark themes and subject matter, overblown melodramatic plot lines, and FMVs. On the other hand, it's just a bunch of people taking themselves too seriously. I really think that the PC gaming industry needs a deep hit of nitrous oxide.

Some of the most well-thought games are also some of the funniest. The LucasArts graphic adventures come to mind, as do the goofy character designs of all the classic Japanese console and arcade games. And these games, the LucasArts ones in particular, didn't do a whole lot in terms of innovation in gameplay — their humor is what made them so memorable and fun to play. This simple idea could get a lot of games a lot more mileage, replay value, and basically, more sales. Good news for everyone, right?



It's a world of darkness, a world of doom, a world of dungeons, a world of tombs ...

I'm all for the bleak world view and "mature subject matter" that a lot of games have, but geez, enough already. It's like some higher power in the gaming world decided that 80% of games contain references to "The Dark One" and involve being the last hope for humanity. Even a touch of humor can go a long way. It sure added to the appeal of titles like *Fallout* and *Dungeon Keeper*.

Guys, be a little more self-deprecating, already. Show me that there's something else going on in that head of yours. Maybe these developers should stop trying to recreate their favorite scenes from sci-fi flicks involving aliens and/or the blood-soaked glory days of their high school D&D sessions and lighten up, have a little fun for a change. I'm sure gamers would appreciate it.

— ED "I'M OUTTA HERE" LEE



Ed Lee (left) blasts his way out of PCXL history...

SECOND PERSON

Leave it to Ed and his fat sack of crack to come up with so backward a notion. How many years did we have to suffer through games that had enemies that *blinked* when you hit them? Can't he, in his opiate-induced haze, remember the endless barrage of antiseptic *MYST* clones or uninspiring *Tomb Raider* rip-offs or the ha-ha-that's-not-funny *Tex Murphy* adventures and its ilk. *Discworld*, anyone?

The real problem is that dark games, despite their forboding names, aren't seriously dark. Most of them drape dark themes over mediocre games (*cough* *Kingpin* *cough* *Deathtrap Dungeon*). The end result of these lame cover-ups? We, as discriminating gamers, are insulted instead of excited. Dark games such as *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2*, and *Diablo* enthralled us by presenting us with serious and frightening worlds that made us grind our teeth with tension.

For my money, I would rather laugh with relief and pride after surviving a hellish ordeal than laugh at some half-baked joke mixed in with my nightmare. I'll keep humor where it belongs — in the bedroom.

— MATT "FUNNY IN THE SACK" HOLMES

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